

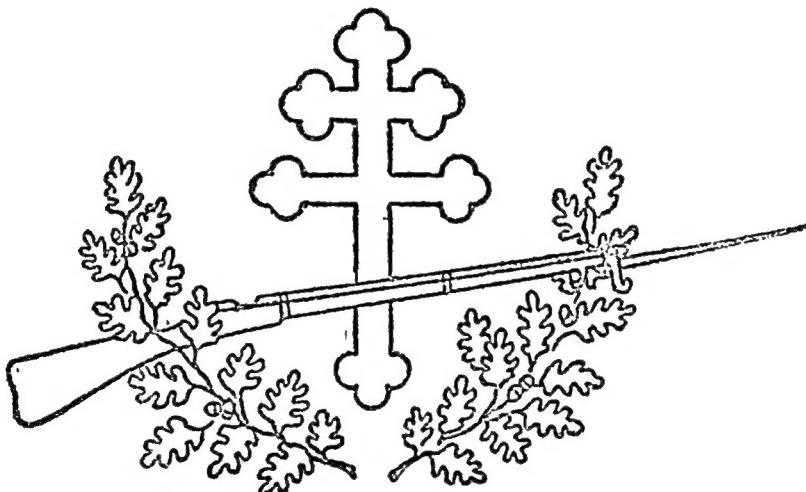


CHARLES DE GAULLE

# CHARLES DE GAULLE

*by*

PHILIPPE BARRES

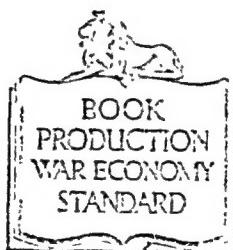


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*Je dédie ce simple livre d'espérance française à la mémoire de mon père, Maurice Barrès, qui connut l'irrévocation allemande deux fois, en 1870 et en 1914, et qui ne désespéra jamais de notre pays, ni de la liberté des esprits dans le monde.*

Dated ... May 1  
29 Sept 1918



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## PREFACE

THE PRESENT WAR has divided the world into two camps : the camp of the Nazis, which is the side of slavery, and the camp of the Allies, which is the side of freedom.

France fought in the front rank of free peoples. She went down in a single battle through lack of preparation.

The Nazis occupy France. On the twenty-second and the twenty-fifth of June, 1940, they imposed upon a weakened and discouraged Government two unconditional armistices. They became masters of the French coasts from Belgium to Spain, on the English Channel and on the Atlantic, and from that formidable base they threaten England and America.

Thus the destruction of France has endangered the liberty of each man and each woman in the whole world.

Amidst this extreme danger a French soldier rose up, on June 18, 1940, to cry aloud for the whole world to hear : "I refuse to accept decisions imposed on a Government enslaved by the enemy. I shall continue the struggle beside the English and our other allies who are determined not to live under the German yoke. France still has her empire, her overseas army, her navy, her flying force, her gold—They must return to the battle. I call on all Frenchmen to continue the fight for independence against Germany."

One man of vision arose to pronounce words that have become historic :

"France has lost one battle. She has not lost the war."

A leader appeared to proclaim aloud :

"My goal, my only goal, is to make sure that France does not stop fighting, in spite of her momentary exhaustion, and that she will have her place when the final victory is won."

This man is Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French.

The author of this book is a Frenchman, unencumbered by any ties to political parties or associations, a journalist by profession, and an officer in the Reserve. In that double capacity, he has served in both wars, 1914 and 1939–40, and between the two wars he has spent many years travelling in Europe, especially in Germany, where he analysed and foresaw most of the effects of Hitler's policies. It is not his fault if the French were surprised by the German onslaught. He has seen, first in France and later in England, where he went immediately after the armistice, the development of General de Gaulle's action, and he has set down here an impartial eye-witness account.

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## CHAPTER I

### I HEAR OF CHARLES DE GAULLE FROM RIBBENTROP AND FROM HITLER'S FRIENDS

THE DRAMA IN which the world is enmeshed to-day began on January 30, 1933. That day, in Berlin, Hitler came to power with the consent of the over-aged Hindenburg.

I was present at the prophetic scene in the Wilhelmstrasse, opposite the Reich Chancellery. The afternoon papers had announced that the National Socialist Storm Troopers and the Stahlhelm would parade at nightfall before Hindenburg and Hitler. At sunset the city, which had never spent a day in such complete silence, seemed to come out of its lethargy. The German masses, ordinarily so dull and colourless, seemed to take on an almost phosphorescent glow. I have never seen a crowd so eager to be worked on, so anxious to let rip.

About eight o'clock a soft breath of air like the breeze that precedes the evening tide at the seashore blew cooling over the eager faces. The yellow flag of the president's palace, whipping out, unfolded the wings of its black eagle. Followers of Hitler, scattered through the crowd, began to intone the National Socialist hymn, the famous pæan to the glory of Horst Wessel, the first martyr, 'killed by the Red Front and Reaction.' It began low, in an undertone, then little by little the chorus grew stronger until the song spread through the square, along the street, and was finally taken up by the whole crowd.

At that moment a window in the palace lighted up, and the heavy, impressive figure of the square-headed marshal appeared, black against a background of gold.

"Heil!" the crowd roared, arms outstretched. "Heil!" And little children, carried on their fathers' shoulders, swayed like heads of wheat in a wind-touched field. The crowd itself swayed, undulated to the rhythm of the hymn, which was sung in slow cadence, with deliberate, pregnant pauses. All the bonds of Prussian discipline burst under the strain of a kind of earnest, youthful frenzy. The green-clad policemen, the 'schupos,' bobbed through the crowd like buoys broken loose from their moorings; powerless, a little drunk, laughing. And the crowd surged ever higher. It flowed up on to the cornices of houses, the tops of lamp-posts, the pedestals of statues, the lower forks of trees. Timid householders quietly closed their windows. And the singing rose louder and louder up toward the symbolic figure of the old Hindenburg.

Suddenly, amidst the blaze of torches and the blare of brasses a column of brown-clad troops began to march by. It seemed impossible

that they could get through ; they would have to march over the mated bodies of the crowd. But the crowd, under the pressure of the on-driving column, surged a little higher up along the walls, bore the column through itself, carried it along, and was carried along with it.

They were not men, they were automatons, anonymous and undifferentiated. On each lean face, sharpened by the chin strap of the rakish caps, was the same ecstatic look. In one hand each man carried a lighted torch and dangled another, threatening to burn himself and the crowd, and raised the other hand in the fascist salute. They marched rapidly, bent eagerly forward, and their sharpened profiles, the extended arms, the standards, the trailing flames and smoke formed an enormous, moving frieze, savage and terrifying.

Then, just as the first flags came up even with the Chancellery, Hitler appeared at a window, not far from Hindenburg.

The crowd yelled, laughed, and sang. The gates of the marshal's palace constantly banged open and shut, letting in whole armfuls of little ten-cent bouquets, gifts of anonymous citizens. Into the open window where Hitler stood other bunches of flowers were drawn up from the street on strings.

Did the crowd sense the meaning of this evening ? Would it have been able to give a name to the great vague hopes floating through the flame-stained air ? To an outside observer, especially to a Frenchman, there was no possible doubt. This was the old Germany, unchanged, unreconciled, rising up again. Hitler was perfectly aware of it, too.

Behind his figure, silhouetted darkly with extended arm, one could sense the shadowy figures of the men of violence, in jaunty caps and gleaming monocles, the chiefs of the Storm Troops and the Schutzstaffel, the Roehms and the Himmlers, the heads of the army, Blomberg and Fritsch, Reichenau and Guderian. The last two were to lead, seven years later, the dash of the armoured forces on Paris. . . . These men had no great love for one another. Some of them would soon fall, on the thirteenth of June, 1934, under the bullets of the others. But among the Germans such antagonisms and their bloody outcome are insignificant, like the bites inflicted on one another by young wolves. And in truth they were all working together for one end : the preparation for the day when, as General von Seeckt put it, the soldiers of the Reichswchr. endowed by their modern weapons with an overwhelming superiority, "would rush into France like a bulldog in a china shop," the day which would see the fulfilment of the pledge formulated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* : 'Destr'ction of France.'

The crowd streamed by all evening long. This ecstatic, demoniac multitude would never again be free men of the fields and woods. It had delivered itself to the men of darkness to be driven by them toward the labour camps, the barracks, the flying fields, the arms factories. The machine of death was beginning to roll.

The taxi-driver who took me home said under his breath, as he counted out my change, "It'll be different now."

"What will?"

"Our whole life, our whole God-damned life of unemployment and starvation."

"You think you'll get a better job?"

"Yeah. In a couple of weeks I'm going into a factory, like all the fellows. In the Albatross aeroplane works."

I asked, "Do you belong to the Nazi party?"

Lowering his voice, he replied, "No. I am a communist."

"I don't get it."

"Sure." He took hold of my arm. "But I'm going to join the Nazi party, like everybody else. You in the democracies are to blame. We've been waiting for you for twelve years. You could have done everything. Just one nation could have led the way for Europe. One great peaceful nation, that's all we needed. It might have been France ; it might have been England. We didn't care as long as the republic lived. But you didn't have the guts. And now you want us poor devils to resist the officers, the Junkers, the Stahlhelm, the Nazis, and all the rest. . . . Uh-uh, not me. I've got the point at last. Better to howl with the wolves than be slaughtered with the donkeys."

Germany once more was rolling toward war. And during those years what was France doing? She was dozing on, lost, as were England and America, indulging her dream of peace and progress. It was a beautiful dream, but costly. Only a few Frenchmen understood that you can be idealistic only if you have the strength to support your ideal. And the voices of these few were lost amid the general indifference, the complacent optimism.

I spent the years 1933 and 1934 in Berlin writing daily articles for the French press. In them I tried to awaken my countrymen to the realization that our prestige was declining, that the small countries of Europe, our natural friends, were anxious about our weakness, and that the shape of war loomed ever larger on the horizon.

If I had not already been aware of it, this danger was made crystal clear to me by two interviews that I had, first with Ribbentrop, then with Hitler.

One morning in April, 1934, somebody I didn't know 'phoned my office on the Regentenstrasse. Mlle Landt, my assistant, wrote down his name : Herr Abetz had called to convey an invitation to dine with a certain Herr von Ribbentrop. Herr Abetz was acting in his capacity as Herr von Ribbentrop's secretary.

Mlle Landt and I found out what we could about these two names. We had heard them before, but they still didn't mean a great deal. It developed that Herr von Ribbentrop was a champagne salesman and a member of the Nazi party. His name was always prominently inscribed on cases of sparkling wine given as prizes in the golf tournaments at Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden. He had just helped his friend Hitler

in his accession to power. Working through the banker Schroeder, of Cologne, he had been instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation between Hitler and Papen. And Abetz was a 'youth' of the post-war generation. Married to a young Frenchwoman from Lille, he was busy promoting 'Franco-German friendship' among student groups.

I was puzzled, but as a journalist I welcomed the opportunity for personal contact with influential Germans. I accepted the invitation and found myself, at eight the next evening, in the black-and-white tiled vestibule of a charming 'villa' in the Dahlem quarter—the section of Berlin's fashionable private homes. Two footmen in white jackets led me to a drawing-room decorated in flowered chintz—all very English. I'd scarcely had time to glance at the garden, with its perfect lawns, tennis court, and swimming-pool, when my host greeted me in a manner as British as a Berliner can manage.

Herr von Ribbentrop was well-dressed, turning grey at the temples, cool-eyed. He would have been completely distinguished if you had not been aware of a mild fixation : a desire to keep constantly in evidence the purity of his straight profile—Greek, or, to put it as Hitler does, Aryan.

Frau von Ribbentrop came in. She was pleasant and unobtrusive. You felt that long ago she had made up her mind to devote herself to admiring the Aryan profile, and the conversation went along without her. Ribbentrop told me that henceforth he would be occupied with foreign affairs and particularly with relations with France. He spoke of my articles, deplored my lack of understanding of 'German necessities' and especially the 'injustice of the Treaty of Versailles.'

At that time I was particularly conversant with the terms of the treaties of Brest-Litowsk and Bucharest that the victorious Reich had imposed in 1917 on Russia and Rumania. I knew them well enough, at least, to recall to Ribbentrop terms that were twenty times more harsh than those of Versailles. "And besides," I pointed out, "you are rearming at the very moment when you ask friendly concessions from us."

Ribbentrop threw up his hands. "That's typical of the French distrust, which causes me constant distress and hinders everything I try to do. All right, we are rearming. But how can a people as strong, as rich in natural resources as the French people be so concerned about what we are doing? Instead of being afraid you have only to rearm yourselves."

"You know very well," I replied, "that we are not afraid. But we're on guard. As for getting back into a race for armaments—we think it would be better to find other means."

Ribbentrop's eyes gleamed. The time had come to bring out the famous German anti-bolshevik argument! He tried hard to sell me the idea of a Franco-German collaboration against Moscow.

I asked, "Are you quite sure that it is to our interest to help you destroy Russia? I doubt it. What's more, you Germans aren't really anti-Russian. You claim you're crusading against communism

to conciliate the timid conservatives of Paris and London. But actually you need Russia. You need her so much to counterbalance England and France that you will make a deal with Moscow as soon as you can. Hasn't Hitler just renewed the non-aggression pact signed by Stresemann and Stalin?"

Ribbentrop blushed, but he insisted, "We will never renounce anti-bolshevism."

"What proof have you to give?"

"Our fidelity to the principles of the Führer."

"Do you really believe," I asked, "that principles carry much weight in politics? Don't you think rather that realistic questions have to be treated in realistic fashion? You say that you are fighting against Versailles. You must understand that so far as helping Frenchmen grasp your real intentions goes this formula is meaningless. We can't live under a system of perpetually increased demands whereby each one of our concessions puts you in a stronger position to make new demands to-morrow. The Versailles Treaty contains a certain number of clauses that you are already violating. Others remain in force. Let's make a revision of the whole thing. Show us your complete plan. Put your cards on the table. Then we'll be able to give you answers based on complete knowledge. Yes to this. No to that. Thus, we'll try to strike a balance to the whole problem."

We had gone into a little blue-and-mauve sitting-room, and Frau von Ribbentrop took up her embroidery. The master of the house looked at me angrily, his Greek nostrils trembled. He leaned against the mantel and said slowly : "For us, sir, Versailles is dead. *Versailles ist tot.*"

I was so struck by his hard, obstinate expression that I finished off, "If you are really determined to destroy everything of the treaty that made our victory sure, and on which Europe is built, it means inevitable war."

Ribbentrop shrugged his shoulders. He started to declaim : "It is impossible for us to stand with stacked arms, with all of Europe enslaved by a static conception of life, a conception symbolized by the construction of your Maginot Line."

He was so spifeful that for a moment I wanted to laugh. "Do our fortifications annoy you?" I demanded.

But he put in hastily, "No. We'll smash through the Maginot Line in tanks. It can be done ; it's a question of quantity and determination. Our specialist, General Guderian, has proved it. And I believe that even your best technical man has the same opinion."

"Who," I interrupted, "is our best technical man?"

He cried, as though enunciating a self-evident truth, "De Gaulle, Colonel de Gaulle. . . . Is it true that he is almost unknown in France?"

I let the question go by, for to tell the truth I had never heard the

name of Colonel de Gaulle. And I was even more surprised to hear it again a few weeks later, this time in the circle of Hitler himself.

It was at Nuremberg, during the big Nazi party congress, in September of that same year, 1934, in the course of an interview I had with the master of Germany.

The morning had been given over to reviews of aeroplanes and of various mechanized units Germany had just begun to manufacture. Hitler had spoken, he had drilled fifty thousand Storm Troopers, giving his commands through a loudspeaker. He had watched a thousand black-clad S.S. troops parade by in goose step without music, the culmination of art. He had presented three hundred new standards to their bearers in the presence of the 'bloody flag' of the Munich putsch of 1923.

I left the field at eleven o'clock. Since I was to be admitted to the Führer's presence I underwent the usual preparatory treatment. It consisted of being shown at first hand the enthusiasm of the populace. I was brought to Nuremberg in one of the cars following Hitler's, and, for five long miles of country road and city streets, had full opportunity to watch the endless chain of ovations, of laughter and tears, the unanimous emotion of men and women, greybeards and tots, a prodigious mixture of devotion and hysteria. And Hitler, in the midst of it all, standing in his car, saluting and smiling.

Our car, close behind his, climbed the steep roads leading to the Burg, the heavy old fortress overlooking Nuremberg. Four or five spectators, myself among them, got out in the courtyard of the oak-shaded keep.

Hitler was waiting for us, and he immediately betrayed his anxiety to impress us. "After all you've seen you wouldn't call that an oppressed people, would you?"

He returned absently the salute of a Nazi chieftain who recited a few words of welcome, then he climbed the stairs ahead of us with his quiet clodhopper walk, and strode through the guard-room. He placed the palm of his hand against one of the columns, looked at the tapestries, went out on to a terrace that overlooked the city and the surrounding plains. As soon as he reached the parapet thousands of voices rose up from below in acclamation. He smiled a strange smile, at once remote and possessive. He raised his hand in a gesture of salutation and benediction. Then he came back into the room to chat with Rudolph Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, Julius Streicher, and Huehnlein, all of whom had come in with us.

In the vault-like atmosphere of this medieval fortress his eyes took on a peculiar value and his voice, which when he opens it up to full volume acquires a beautiful singing quality, sank to its more usual grating tones. Apparently his mind, like his words, opens up fully only in oratory. In the tones of ordinary conversation he tends to create only silence.

Hitler sat down to eat a sandwich with Hess and Streicher. The

three men were alone at a little table. Their heavy silhouettes stood out against the portrait of Charles V by Albrecht Dürer, the famous standing Charles V in slashed breeches. The beams over their heads were decorated with double-headed eagles, also by the great Dürer. The sunlight, thrusting long spears of light through the Gothic windows, seemed only to heighten the shadows.

Outside, in the steep street, among the ancient roofs and baroque alleys of Nuremberg, the crowd was still shouting. People climbed on the walls, scaled the rocks, perched in the tops of trees. They kept repeating rhythmically, "We want our Führer!" Then they sang *Deutschland über Alles*, waved thousands of handkerchiefs, thousands of bouquets. Hitler went to a window. He went through the motion in a rhythm that had become natural to him. You felt that though the ecstasy of the people no longer moved him it interested him still as a sign, like an aviator's casual glance at the control board.

"You see," he said to me, "even at this distance they recognize who is at the window. They don't confuse Hess with Streicher, or with me."

And then all at once I was in front of Julius Streicher, chief of the Nazis in Nuremberg. I gave my name.

"And I," he said, rocking back on his short legs, his bald skull purple with imminent apoplexy, "I am Streicher, the one they call the 'Terror of Franconia.' You don't ask where are the Jews I've killed. A Dane said to me the other day 'There must be three thousand of them.' I answered, 'You're wrong, my dear man, thirty thousand!'"

He thumped those near him on the shoulder—the tall Huehnlein, chief of the Nazi motorized divisions, and the slender Von Tschammer Osten, the great master of sports in Germany, the blue-eyed Rudolf Hess and the dull Alfred Rosenberg. His laugh rang through the vaults. Everywhere one heard the rattle of spurs, the ring of boots on flagstones. I thought of the drawings of Gustave Doré, of ancient stories of the knights of Charlemagne and their epic battles with the German lords, with traitor Ganelon, the Terror of the Harz.

A visitor was timid about taking Hitler's picture. Streicher grabbed him, shoved him toward the Führer. "Go on, for God's sake, show a little guts." And he bellowed with laughter again.

"The fight against the Jews," he went on to me, "has appeared periodically during the course of history, but soon we've got to face the final battle."

Hitler let his cronies ramble on. Caught between his strenuous performance of the morning and the exhausting routine yet to come in the afternoon, he seemed to stand by and watch the flow of this magnificent day, to submit himself to it, and at the same time to dominate it, as a hawk soars over the land below, at once remote and vigilant.

A pretty girl brought an armful of red gladioli, which Hitler took to his arms and then handed on to a Storm Trooper. He shook the girl's hand slowly, giving her a look at once piercing and gentle, the look of a first-class actor who knows his part well.

"You are the gardener's daughter, aren't you?"

"Yes, Führer."

"You'll remember this day all your life, won't you?"

"Yes."

He gave her another long look, put his hand on her shoulder. When the girl was ready to melt into tears he made her a light bow, and with a curtsey she fled.

Next, somebody brought in a palsied old man, the inevitable veteran of Gravelotte and Saint-Privat. He was so bent over his cane that he had great difficulty straightening up far enough to look at the Führer.

Hitler asked him : "You were victorious in the France of 1871. You were young in a great Germany?"

"Yes, Führer."

"Very well, I promise you one thing—you will die in a great Germany."

Meanwhile, from outside the cries of the crowd became more insistent. Hitler went back to the window. He called us to him. A young man had climbed halfway up the enormous tower and was perched, hysterical with his own boldness, astride a cornice. When he saw that the Führer had noticed him he waved and gesticulated, wholly beside himself. Would he fall? Neither he nor the crowd nor anyone cared a whit.

"You see," Hitler said to me, "fifteen years ago this city was Marxist from top to bottom, the most Communist town in Bavaria. The first time I came here to speak I had been told, 'It's all right, you'll find a local unit of the Nazi Party.' What I found was a horde of Communists surrounding five or six unfortunate National Socialists. It was one of the worst meetings I ever saw. I managed to say a few words just the same. The next year I came back. Since they'd learned that I was dangerous it had become still worse. For two whole hours I endured their hecklers, their cries for my blood. I expected at any moment to find myself sailing through the window. Worst of all was when they pushed up on the platform a veteran blinded in the World War who began to rail against everything that men have come to venerate in the world. But look how mobs are. It so happened that I also was blinded for some time as a result of the war. So I said to that frenzied horde : 'I, too, have suffered what this man suffers. Like him I was blinded. I was even more blind than he, but I found the light. I saw Germany. I saw duty. He will see them, too.' I put my arm round the man's shoulders and said many things like that, and the crowd was calmed. . . . But how much time, how many speeches, how many million and million propaganda leaflets and still more speeches before we won over this city!"

Hitler looked far away, over the horizon, over Germany, and he murmured : "All that was not accomplished all alone!"

Slightly ruffled by his over-simplified method of self-justification, I said : "Still, anti-Bolshevism is a useful political method ; it's good

propaganda. But certainly there's a profound element in your success that you haven't mentioned : your passionate belief in what you were doing. You have to have faith in your own words to make others have faith in you."

The idea seemed to strike Hitler. He took his time answering. He went again to the window. You could see clearly outlined against the sky his rather thick figure, his vulpine forehead, his heavy eyes filled with sinister light.

"I ?" he said finally, turning to me, in a harsh tone. "I've always known to whom I was talking."

It was the last thing he said, and perhaps he had said too much.

We watched him, from high up in the tower, ride away in his black open Mercedes, always standing, solid, a block amidst the seething delirium of the masses.

He had just left when Huehnlein came up to me, Huehnlein, who was to become famous as the chief of the N.S.K.K. (National-Socialist-Kraftwagen-Korps—Nazi motorized corps). Perhaps he was bothered by the last declaration of his boss and the use I might make of it in France. Perhaps he was simply responding to that prodigious urge to talk to foreigners that afflicts the Nazis and, indeed, all the subjects of dictators.

At any rate, Huenhlein asked, "What do you think of our cars and our tanks ?"

"Very interesting," I said, not wishing to commit myself.

But he was insistent. "And how have you got along in France with this branch of the service ? What is my great French colleague doing ?" Noticing, perhaps, my look of astonishment, he added, "I mean your specialist in mechanization, Colonel de Gaulle ?"

By this time my ignorance was positively beginning to disturb me. Who was this French officer, this technical expert who seemed so little known in his own country and so respected in Germany ?

## CHAPTER II

### A NEW CONCEPT OF WAR

I WAS BACK in Paris in October. One day I happened to lunch with some friends. Several Cabinet Ministers were among the guests. What an astonishing, what a troubling contrast this gathering offered to the one in Nuremberg ! There, amidst all the imperial trappings, the constant din of the populace, there were only jackboots, shaved heads, the smell of sweat, sandwiches, and cold water. Here, in the intimate atmosphere of a well-to-do middle-class apartment, furnished with a few superb pieces and a great many ugly things, pleasant men of the world talked of Parliament, wine, books, and women. Under the quizzical stare of Tardieu and the frank astonishment of Barthou,

Delbos, blindfolded, was sipping Bordeaux wines and guessing the year of each. I got hold of Paul Reynaud, who was less amused than the others by parlour games, and I told him my impression of what was brewing in Berlin. He seemed to me well-informed and as open-minded as ever.

"I grant everything you say," he replied, after listening carefully to me. "But don't you understand, France is asleep. She's asleep like England, like America. The prospect of a new war is so repugnant and bothersome to her she'd rather not believe in it than face the measures necessary to avoid it."

Just as we were parting I remembered the question asked me first by Ribbentrop, then by Huenhlein. "Why," I asked, "are the Germans so interested in Colonel de Gaulle?"

Reynaud straightened up his short body with the perky twinkle of the eye that makes him sometimes look like Mickey Mouse. He replied quickly, "Why? Because the Germans are well-informed about our military affairs. Because their attaché, General von Kuehlenthal, knows his business. Don't you know De Gaulle? He's the most brilliant innovator in our army. He's the man whose theory of modern armoured units has just been commented on by General Guderian himself in his book on tanks, *Achtung-Panzer*. De Gaulle? He's the boy who can save France."

With all that build-up I set out to find about this unusual soldier.

In 1934 Lieutenant-Colonel de Gaulle was an obscure officer, not very different from so many other members of that unique body of born military leaders that the French people never stop giving to their army. He was typical of that particular ascetic breed: badly paid, not very well dressed, oblivious to everything except the army and the family, working day and night, patiently devoted to rectifying in silence the results of our imprudent political policies—those political policies of ours that were at once so sublime and so preposterous.

At that time De Gaulle was secretary-general of the Council of National Defence, whose members included the most important heads of our army. He knew the principal men among them: Marshal Pétain, under whose orders he served during the war of 1914; General Weygand, with whom he had taken part in 1921 in the victory at Warsaw.

These two soldiers were at the top of their profession, famous, heaped with honours. Did they have any inkling of the value of the ideas that preoccupied their subordinate? It is hard to tell. In the army, as everywhere else, men of different generations have a hard time seeing eye to eye.

Tall, slow-moving, spare as a farm hand from the north, Colonel de Gaulle had two outstanding qualities: a quick intelligence that enabled him to pull the essential out of the whole amidst a welter of details, to understand the proper relationship of cause and effect, to size up the future by understanding the past, and, with it, an astonishing natural ability to communicate his ideas. With gifts like those a man

will go far if he knows how to choose a goal and give himself a mission in life.

An active existence, soldierly habits, the study of history have all contrived to give Colonel de Gaulle a profound knowledge of France. He knows it instinctively, as anyone does who is born into the petty nobility or the provincial bourgeoisie, those two classes which are set like the mortar of our country between the classes called privileged and the mass of the population.

Charles André Joseph Marie de Gaulle was born in the house of his grandmother in Lille, France, on November 22, 1890. His father, a respected professor of philosophy and literature who taught for many years at the famous Jesuit college on the Rue de Baugirard in Paris, inspired him with an early taste for philosophy. Even to-day the leader of the Free French reads Nietzsche, Hegel, or, better still, Montaigne and Pascal when he can spare a few minutes before retiring.

But do not let us anticipate. As a little boy Charles de Gaulle was, according to friends of his family, 'perfectly devilish, horribly devilish.' With the help of his three brothers and a sister he specialized in practical jokes of every kind, which he played on friends and servants of his family. He was renowned, too, for his passion for tin soldiers and for the terrific 'blitzkriegs' he led against the forces of his brothers.

This warlike youth led him, rather logically, to become in 1911 a pupil of the famous military school of St. Cyr, the French Sandhurst for infantry and cavalry.

By that time he had become so tall that he was occasionally nicknamed by his classmates 'the long asparagus.' But because of his high scholastic standing he was allowed to select the regiment to which he was to become attached upon his graduation in 1912. He chose the 33rd Infantry Regiment out of admiration for its commander, who was no other than Colonel Philippe Pétain, the future marshal.

Jacques de Sieyes, at present General de Gaulle's representative in the United States, was his classmate at St. Cyr. He remembers that the future general showed, even then, a 'fierce energy, coupled with a very exact sense of discipline.' Sieyes adds, laughing, that he himself thinks all the more highly of the latter quality 'because he is less well endowed with it.' However that may be, both men shared a very strong sense of duty. Proof of it was to come during World War I, when Jacques de Sieyes lost a leg in the front-line trenches. De Gaulle, for his part, was wounded at the Battle of Dinant in Belgium in August 1914, promoted to a captaincy in 1915, and awarded three citations.

He was wounded for the second time in March 1915 in Champagne, and again on the second of March, 1916, during the all-out offensive of the Crown Prince against Verdun. That third time he was too badly hurt to get away, and was made prisoner. It was at the Fort of Douaumont. With the enemy attacking his battalion from all sides, following a terrible bombardment, Captain de Gaulle roused his men to a furious counter-attack, and fell in hand-to-hand combat.

He remained in the hands of the Germans until the end of the war,

despite five attempts to escape. Once he managed to dig a tunnel out of the rock. His guards recaptured him disguised as a soldier of the Reichswehr. "Of course, they always knew me at a distance," explains De Gaulle, "because of my height." The 'long asparagus' of St. Cyr could never hide properly. He was interned in a special punishment camp. It was there that he met Major Catroux, who was later, as a general, to join him in London.

Failing in his attempts to escape, De Gaulle settled down to study the Germans. He had leisure enough during the two years and eight months of his captivity—almost one thousand days, a good part of which he spent in solitary confinement. Despite the wretchedness of his existence and his sufferings, he noted down, amidst the collapse of Germany in 1918, a series of observations that he brought back to France after the Armistice under the title *Dissension in the Enemy Ranks*.

De Gaulle insisted that the post-war policy of France should take full account of the import of the quarrels of the Germans with one another. "It must be made impossible," he said, "for the Germans to come out of their defeat stronger and more menacing than ever." But warnings such as his got scant attention from the rulers or from the public at the moment.

After a period back at St. Cyr, as a professor of history, this time, and not as a student, De Gaulle turned up at Warsaw in 1921, with the right hand of Marshal Foch, General Weygand. Poland was defending herself against Bolshevik Russia, and France had sent a military mission to help its ally. The mission was lucky enough to play an active part in bringing about the victory that freed Poland. De Gaulle came back from Warsaw with a citation signed by Weygand and the Polish Cross of St. Wenceslas.

He spent the years 1924–26 in Paris, in the War College (Ecole de Guerre), to receive the special military education required of all French officers slated for important commands. His term at the college gave rise to a typical incident.

The head instructor at that time was General Moyrand. The general was a dyed-in-the-wool partisan of the tactical doctrine of the moment, the method called *a priori*. That bit of military jargon summed up the method in favour among the great theoreticians of the day. Their great fetish was the minute study of a given zone chosen in advance as a field of battle and its elaborate preparation as a section of terrain. Once the defences were organized, the lines of fire, of attack, and of eventual retreat laid out, the whole trick lay in luring the enemy into the zone where his defeat was all arranged.

This military doctrine was based entirely on the notion that defence was superior to offence, that fire power outweighed mobility, and finally that the enemy would let himself be lured wherever you wished. It was out of this belief that was to come, several years later, the Maginot Line.

Now Commander de Gaulle—he had just been promoted—did not

believe in the doctrine of *a priori* any more than he believed in the section of terrain or the superiority of fire power over mobility, or even in the simplicity of the enemy. "The enemy," he said, "is no more stupid than we are. He will also try to find the most favourable terrain." In short, De Gaulle opposed to the *a priori* method the method of 'adaptation to circumstances.'

Because of his opposition De Gaulle was considered cranky, a nonconformer, something of a freethinker. General Moyrand liked him all right, but thought at the same time that De Gaulle ought to submit to the opinions of his elders, who were rich in experience acquired exercising important commands in the war of 1914-18, during which De Gaulle himself had been only a modest officer in the line.

In accordance with the custom of the War College, at the end of the year of instruction pupils and teachers went on a tactical trip. This trip consisted of a series of field manœuvres during which the pupils commanded important units in order to put their lessons to a practical test.

That year De Gaulle was commander-in-chief of the Blue Army, so called because the soldiers wear as a distinguishing mark a strip of blue cloth on their helmets. And the manœuvres took place near Grenoble, on the frontier of the Alps.

De Gaulle, after reconnoitring the situation and the terrain, decided *not* to apply the famous *a priori* method. He refused to prepare his section of terrain and stuck to the idea of freedom of movement and initiative.

It created a great to-do among the high officers who were judges of the manœuvres. But the pupils were allowed complete freedom of choice, and De Gaulle was permitted to do as he saw fit, however revolutionary his methods might seem. Anyway the manœuvre ended in a brilliant victory for the Blues commanded by De Gaulle. The discomfited defender of the section-of-terrain theory, General Moyrand, sent for the conqueror and tried to convince him that, while he had obviously won, his success was revolutionary only in appearance. In reality he had taken his inspiration from the official doctrine, and so he shouldn't try to make much capital of his methods.

But De Gaulle held his success, and he had no intention of letting himself be soft-soaped. He had won without following the official methods, and he stuck to his point.

Then Moyrand got mad. He made De Gaulle finish out his time at a lower rank. The incident created something of a scandal and finally reached the ears of the commander-in-chief, Marshal Philippe Pétain. He sent for De Gaulle.

The latter told the marshal his side of the outcome of the manœuvres and what followed.

Pétain was interested. He said, "Go write me a report on what you did. Take a couple of weeks off to get it in shape."

After the commander-in-chief had read the report he was still

more interested and had the author of it appointed instructor at the very War College he had just left. De Gaulle called his lectures Military Theory and the Functions of the Commanding Officer. As proof of his great esteem for his subordinate Pétain was present in person at the first lecture.

Afterwards he appointed De Gaulle to his General Staff.

Clearly, Marshal Pétain seems to have realized how important was the debate on theoretical principles that divided into two camps the proponents of strictly defensive war and the believers in offence and movement. Will anyone ever know for what reason, since he was at least aware of the problem, he did not lend the decisive weight of his authority to those who proposed the right solution ?

De Gaulle remained Marshal Pétain's aide-de-camp as long as the latter remained commander-in-chief of the army. When Pétain ceded that position to Weygand, De Gaulle went into the General Staff of the Army of the Rhine at Treves. He became acutely aware of the growing spirit of war among the German leaders. The years following found him in succession commander of the 19th Battalion of Chasseurs à Pied in the Rhineland, then head of governmental missions in Iraq, Iran, and Egypt. Obviously it is possible for a simple French army officer to see more of the world than it is for an inspiring dictator, whether he be German or Italian.

What De Gaulle had seen gave him occasion to think, and he published, in 1932, his first book about military questions : *Au Fil de l'Epée* (*The Philosophy of Command*), in which he took the first step toward his future break with the teaching of the French High Command. De Gaulle was 42 years old. At that moment Pétain and Weygand recalled him to be secretary-general of the National Defence Council in Paris.

There, once again, behind the windows of the War Collège overlooking the gardens of the Champ de Mars, during the endless meetings at which his superiors wrangled over measures for the defence of France and her empire, De Gaulle realized completely the defects of the system as it was constituted and of the men who guided it. They were too squeamish, too anxious to avoid the accusation of imperialism that was constantly brought against France at that time. They were too submissive to Cabinet ministers who were themselves anxious to take the easiest way. Opportunist politicians and timid generals, that was not the way to deal with a Germany which had once again become industrious, unscrupulous, and aggressive.

Why shouldn't De Gaulle have been disturbed ? He realized so clearly how precarious ten years of concessions to the defeated had made our position as victors. It was indeed comparable, as Pétain himself pointed out in his speech on admission to the French Academy, to the 'peau de chagrin' in the famous Ba'zac story, the skin that shrunk smaller with every wish. He did not, however, allow himself to become discouraged. One by one he studied all the elements of the French problem. He worked. He wrote a new book in 1934 : *Vers*

*Armée de Métier*, published in America under the title *The Army of the Future*.<sup>1</sup> And the vigour of his thought never faltered.<sup>1</sup>

*Our Frontiers in Danger  
Belgium ! Belgium !*

Readers of all countries are passionately interested in the lives of the seekers after knowledge : the philosophers, engineers, explorers, doctors, surgeons. But they have little conception of the laborious life and the endless research of a true officer of a nation in which military science has been, of necessity, cultivated for centuries. The French officer is a surgeon who puts himself at the call of his country in its moments of agony ; but he is also a physician and an educator of the people in their everyday life. He can fulfil this dual responsibility only by dint of perpetual work, constant thought, complete self-sacrifice. So Charles de Gaulle, in the midst of the heavy duties of his various commands, his inspections, his missions abroad, found time for the most important task of all—the elaboration of his theories. He observed minutely the France he was called upon to defend ; and bit by bit he pieced together his system to serve her.

France, like any other nation, has its fatal weaknesses. De Gaulle looked at them squarely. Notice with what clarity he demonstrated, seven years before 1940, the weakness of our frontiers :

As a portrait suggests to the person who looks at it the whole course of the subject's life, the map of France reveals our destiny. The body of the country reveals in its centre a stronghold, a forbidding cluster of mountains, flanked by the plateaus of Languedoc, Limousin, and Burgundy, surrounded by vast slopes, most of them inaccessible to an enemy attacking from abroad, slashed by moats, that is, the Saône, Rhone, and Garonne rivers, walled in by the Jura, the Alps, the Pyrenees, protected in the distance by the English Channel, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. But to the north-east there is a fateful breach which runs from the all-important basins of the Seine and the Loire straight through to German territory. The Rhine, set by nature as at once a limit and a protection to the Gauls, just touches France, then leaves her and lays open her flank.

It's true that the Vosges Mountains act as a huge rampart, but they can be flanked through the Belfort pass or through the salt marshes. It's true that the slopes of the Moselle and the Meuse, anchored at one end on the plateau of Lorraine, on the other in the Ardennes, form very considerable obstacles. But these obstacles are superficial, and one slip, one moment off guard, or one single error would result in their immediate loss. Or their rear would be exposed as soon as the army fell back at all in Hainault or Flanders. It so happens that in these lowlands there is neither wall nor moat to

<sup>1</sup> *The Army of the Future*, by General de Gaulle, published by J. B. Lippincott Company.

facilitate resistance, no heights, no rivers parallel to the front. Worst of all, the lay of the land itself organizes invasion along multiple lines, through the valleys of the Meuse, the Sambre, the Scheldt, the Scarpe, the Lys. The very rivers, highways, and railroads form natural lanes for the enemy.

Bothersome as it is in relief, the north-east frontier is even worse in its salient. To achieve a concentric attack an enemy would need only to strike simultaneously in Flanders, in the Ardennes, in Lorraine, in Alsace, and at the threshold of Burgundy. Breaking through at one point he could roll up the entire defensive system of France. A slight movement forward would take him to the Seine, the Aube, the Marne, the Aisne, or the Oise. Then it would be easy going to the heart of France, to Paris, which is at the junction of these rivers.

This wide opening in the walls is the age-old weakness of France.

Pay close attention to those names : Meuse, Sambre, Aisne, Oise, Marne, Paris. They were the names in the headlines in May, 1940, during the German invasion. De Gaulle had hit the nail on the head when he said "the age-old weakness of France." It was precisely the opening between the Sambre and the Meuse that the Maginot Line did not cover.

De Gaulle demonstrated the mistake we made in leaving the Sedan region practically defenceless while we massed powerful fortifications before Nancy.

For most Germans [he said] the way to France lies through Belgium, along the line of the Berlin-Paris railroad. Schlieffen's famous plan, novel as it seemed, was based firmly on the realities of the situation. Even if Belgium had had a hundred treaties of neutrality, would they have diverted toward Nancy an army that was inevitably drawn toward Charleroi ? The same thing could easily happen to-morrow. Swept along by the demands of the situation, following the natural direction of their railways, eight out of ten of which reach our frontier north of Thionville, tempted by the flat roads of Westphalia and Flanders and by the hundreds of canals through the Ruhr and the Netherlands, attracted toward Antwerp and Calais by their natural instinct to keep an eye on England, determined to strike us down by the shortest and easiest route, wouldn't the Germans of necessity strike through the sources of the Oise, the weak point in our fragile armour ?

In other words, on Belgium depends the safety of France on her most vulnerable flank. If it were possible to erect a solid barrier in the Ardennes or in Luxembourg we would be assured of time and space in which to fight.

Unfortunately there was no such barrier. Leopold of Belgium did not raise it in 1940 as his father, King Albert, did in 1914. De

Gaulle warned us in no uncertain terms that this would be the case. We knew that war continually threatened. De Gaulle was not blinded by any systematic hatred of the Germans. He understood their nature, but he grasped too the abyss that separates them from the French.

For [he said] between the Gauls and the Teutons victories won by each side have settled nothing and satisfied nothing. Sometimes, worn out by war, the two peoples have seemed to draw close to each other, as exhausted boxers hang on in the clinches. But as soon as they recovered each one always cast a wary eye on the other. This mutual hostility grows out of the nature of things. No geographical obstacles keep the two nations apart. The constant osmosis set up between them has caused them to influence each other in many ways ; but it has also arbitrarily limited their respective fields of action. The Franco-German frontier has always been an open wound. From whichever side it comes, the wind that blows over it is laden with distrust.

Temperamental differences deepen the bitterness. It's not that each one fails to appreciate the virtues of the other or hasn't dreamed at times of the great things they could accomplish together. But they respond to things so differently that the two peoples remain in a state of constant distrust. How could a German understand, get along with, or trust a Frenchman, a creature who has so much order in his head and so little in his actions, a universally sceptical logic-monger, a hard-working lazybones, a home-body who acquires colonies, a passionate lover of Alexandrines, tail coats, and public parks who sings at the top of his voice, goes about in unpressed clothes, and throws papers on the grass, a man who unites in himself the spirits of Colbert and Louvois, a Jacobin who whoops it up for the Emperor, a politician who believes in the Holy Alliance, a soldier whipped at Charleroi picking himself up to attack on the Marne—in short, a flighty, changeable, contradictory person. On our side Germany bothers us : too much a child of the nature to which she stays as close as she can, a bundle of strong but hazy feelings, a nation of born artists who have no taste, skilled technicians who cling to feudal ideas, bellicose family men, fond of restaurants that look like churches, factories in the wildwood, toilets built like Gothic palaces ; a race of oppressors who expect to be loved, individualists who obey blindly, knights of the blue flower who run their fingers down their throats after too much beer. They follow a path that Siegfried the Limousin saw as epic in the morning, romantic at noon, belligerent at evening. Their soul is an ocean, magnificent and glassy, giving up to the fisherman's net a mixture of monsters and treasures ; a cathedral whose multi-coloured nave, a conjunction of noble arches, filled with delicate sounds, fuses the emotion, the light, and the religion of the world into a symphony

for the senses, the intellect, and the soul, but whose gloomy transept, echoing with barbarous cacophony, offends the eyes, the mind, and the heart.

So what has France got to fend off war, to defend its life and its two thousand years of civilization ?—nothing but its army.

Wide open, her naked body exposed to attack, deprived of all respite and all refuge, where can the Motherland find the potential of protection save in arms ? The sword is at once the final argument in her quarrels and the only odds she has. In the last analysis, to make up for everything awkward in her terrain, silly in her political policies, and weak in her character, she has only the art of war, the skill of her troops, the sufferings of her soldiers. Those are the advantages peculiar to her. The power of the United States can grow out of all proportion to its military force ; defeats do not endanger the future of Russia ; Italy was formed despite many adverse circumstances. But for us our greatness or our downfall are in direct proportion to our effectiveness in battle. Because of her mental and physical make-up France must be armed or cease to be. It's a harsh fact that runs counter to our idealism and our independent character. It gives our actions as a nation a strangely contradictory quality. The same quality forced Mazarin, who detested soldiers, to creat the great royal army, led Saint-Just to adopt strategy, Gambetta to the Ministry of War, Rochefort to the intrigues of Boulanger, and brought to Clemenceau, as capstone to his career, the admirations of generals.

IS THERE ANY WAY OF MEETING THE DANGER ?  
ARE FORTIFICATIONS THE ANSWER ? NO—FREEDOM OF  
MOVEMENT

Having raised the question, De Gaulle provides an answer :

When we fight, the nature of things allows us no delay. We cannot retreat, not even so much as half a dozen miles. If we lose even a single battle Paris will be put to fire and sword. For all these reasons our defence must be quick and sure, especially since the Germanic enemy, who always prepares methodically, is adept at delivering quick and violent attacks. The tactics of Frederick the Great, the mass warfare introduced by Moltke, the great wheeling movement invented by Schlieffen, all represent different aspects of the same lightning swiftness. To-day Germany plans to use all the means at her disposal for a rapid break-through. A large part of our troops must be always ready and prepared to deploy its greatest strength at the first attack.

Following his reasoning to its logical conclusion, De Gaulle becomes something of a prophet. He visualizes the warfare of the future :

Our decisive battles [he insisted] will always be fought in fine weather, on a huge plain reached easily by roads in good repair. The enemy, under cover of the forests of the Rhineland, the Moselle, and the Ardennes, will find it a simple matter to pick his own time and place for attack. The defender, if he remains purely on the defensive, will find himself caught out, immobilized, outflanked. If on the other hand he maintains his freedom of movement, takes the initiative, he will find himself able to meet the attack from whatever quarter it comes. It is the only constructive attitude to take with the German, for although he is unsurpassable in carrying out what he has prepared, he is always at a loss when he is attacked from a quarter he did not expect. Consequently France will be protected only if her armies are endowed with great flexibility.

Then should fortifications be completely despised? Would the Maginot Line, then in process of construction, be useless? De Gaulle never said so.

It's true [he went on] that France has always tried to stop up the breaches in her frontiers by fortifications. She's still at it. Her obvious defects gave rise, at different epochs, to the ideas of Vauban, Gouvin-Saint-Cyr, Séré de Rivières, Painlevé, and Maginot. It would be impossible to set too high a store on the advantages for defence of permanent fortified positions. But fortifications need adequate garrisons; and besides, their effectiveness in depth is limited. In any case, they leave the northern frontier completely unprotected. And how can you estimate the disastrous effect that modern mechanized weapons might produce on the defenders—dive bombers, heavy tanks, poison gas?

It's too obvious to point out that the main lines of his prophecy were fulfilled word for word. The Germans did pour in by the northern route, which was unprotected by the Maginot Line. Our soldiers were caught off guard, completely dazed by the combination of tanks and dive bombers against which they were totally unprepared. No wonder they went under.

What could have been done to put iron into our conscript army? De Gaulle had the answer:

The time has come to supplement our mass of reserves and recruits, which is the mainstay of national defence but slow to mobilize and clumsy to get under way. In the nation's extremity their superhuman sacrifices are invaluable, but only when the nation is in ultimate danger of its life. They are not enough. To them must be added a mobile instrumentality of war, a force capable of immediate action, strong because it is permanent, coherent and trained to warfare. There can be no defence of France without a professional army.

Let there be no misunderstanding on this point. De Gaulle was not suggesting that France should abandon the principle of an armed people or give up the system of democratic conscription. He wanted to keep the system but improve it. His idea was that an army of recruits should be topped by a body of professional soldiers, as the long, easily shattered shaft of a lance is stopped by a steel point.

The shaft of the lance would always be the great mass of the national army, however hastily trained, slow to mobilize and heavy to handle. The steel point would be a hundred thousand young soldiers, especially trained and equipped with the finest modern weapons, masters of land and air. For it was axiomatic that these hundred thousand picked fighters would be armed with ultra-modern materials. It was precisely because they would best be able to make use of the most recent mechanical armaments that their small force would be able to conquer millions of soldiers trained and equipped in the old-fashioned way.

#### THE TANK AND THE AEROPLANE ARE THE KINGPINS OF MODERN WARFARE

A helpful friend since its inception [Charles de Gaulle pointed out], the machine is now the mistress of our destiny. It has changed our lives more than anything invented in the last six thousand years. It makes our clothes, heats our houses, cooks our food, transports us from one place to another, helps us build houses and till the soil. It reproduces our voices and our pictures and broadcasts them through space. But we are still its servants. We cannot stop its advance. We can't deny the fact that three modern machine guns shoot more bullets per minute than an entire Napoleonic battalion. We can't deny that one lone aeroplane detects the positions of more of the enemy in a single hour than all of Murat's cavalry did in a whole day. A single radio station sends more messages than an infinite number of couriers.

There spoke the modern officer who understood the necessity of introducing into the army all the most recent discoveries of science.

The important thing nowadays [he went on] is not to make the enemy feel the strength of your arm but to be able to manipulate a tube, a greasebox, a flywheel. At an earlier time when we said 'troops' we meant a closely-knit body of men so organized as to insure the maximum functioning of hearts and muscles together. To-day the word means machines adjusted to work together and crews trained to service them. . . .

The lance and the sword, then the cannon and the rifle were all that was required to regulate the fate of the world for centuries. The piercing sight of Alexander, the sure eye of Hannibal, the spyglass of Napoleon were strong enough to take in whole fields of battle. By the use of bugles, resonant voices, standards, and

guidons, in a pinch the white plume of the king, armies were manœuvred in order. To-day the infantry needs fifteen different weapons, the artillery sixty-eight different models of guns, the engineers sixteen different categories of instruments. The balloon, the aeroplane, gas, and tanks all have a part in this vast organization. The slightest engagement is impossible without range finders, photographs, maps, and compasses. No satisfactory communications can be maintained without a network of wires, blinkerlights, and wavelengths.

Having said all that, De Gaulle admits readily that even the most perfect machine is useless without an attendant fully capable of handling it.

As the precision of so many machines is increased, their proper handling becomes increasingly contingent upon the intelligence of the men directing them. A machine gun can, in a few seconds, send a spray of bullets into a small area : its effectiveness then is terrific or nil according to how it is aimed. An observer can, from his plane, grasp all the details of an action ; but think of the consequences if he makes just one mistake ! An intricate series of commands makes a submarine submerge in thirty seconds ; but a control turned with improper timing will send the craft to the bottom. Finally the interdependence of engines has become so great that one can be efficiently used only if it is properly co-ordinated to others. The bully-boy of Napoleon's day loaded his gun, sighted, fired on command, and let it go at that. But, to get maximum efficiency out of an automatic rifle it's not enough just to aim it, keep it loaded, and shoot. The soldier must, besides, know how to take advantage of the terrain, use camouflage, march, take cover, overcome night conditions, gauge distances, exchange signals in code with his neighbours, use, when the occasion demands, field glasses, a compass, a map ; he has to wear a gas mask, be able to handle a shovel, a pick, a sickle, an axe, adapt himself constantly to changing conditions. The army, even down to the most humble of its members, is subject to the law of progress which dictates that every improvement that increases the power of men by the same token increases their labour.

And that is why the solution of military problems does not consist simply in giving to masses of citizen-soldiers the whole panoply of modern armaments : they wouldn't know how to use them. Such arms are too complicated to be handled by untrained men.

A mass of run-of-the-mill soldiers laden down with them would fall quickly at the mercy of a small number of picked men well trained in their use.

But when we say *arms* we must ask what arms. De Gaulle put it clearly in 1934 : the supreme weapon, the one invented in our time,

the one that revolutionized warfare is the weapon propelled by the internal-combustion engine—the tank.

Crawling on its caterpillar treads, carrying machine guns and artillery, it advances into the front line, moves over mounds and ditches, destroys trenches and barbed wire. However faltering and unwieldy it may have seemed at first, the tank revolutionized military science. The tanks that are now in service in all armies, or are about to be put in service, have left far behind the rusty hunks of tin they were in the beginning. The modern tank will carry from three to fifteen men protected by steel from everything but direct hits by large or medium shells. They cover ground over all kinds of terrain at any speed they like up to twenty-five miles an hour, firing in all directions. Their crews, sheltered from gas in their hermetically sealed fortresses, able to take cover under smoke screens, connected by radio with the rear, with neighbouring units, and with supporting aeroplanes, become the real aristocrats of battle, freed from the chains that bind the infantry. They don't escape danger, of course, but they certainly do escape the helplessness of soldiers exposed to shells and bullets in the open. For that reason as much as because of its power the tank has become the capital unit of manœuvre. . . . It is axiomatic that in the future, on land and in the air, a carefully picked personnel, getting maximum efficiency from extremely varied and powerful armament, will have a terrible superiority over more or less confused masses. We shall see, as Paul Valery once put, it, the development of actions by a few picked men working in teams, producing in a few seconds, at the most unexpected time and place, shattering results.

Let us note in passing that this army of professionals, small in size but wonderfully efficient, could have been that of the League of Nations. De Gaulle had envisaged this in 1932 at the time when as secretary of the Supreme War Council in Paris he was providing for the documentation of André Tardieu's recommendations on behalf of France before the League in Geneva. But the democracies so vitally interested in the success of the League did not succeed in adopting this military instrument, which would have maintained her prestige and imposed on every nation respect for the disarmament clauses.

After 1934, when the League began to yield definitely to Hitler, France alone could have provided the mechanical army indispensable to the defence of liberty.

### CHAPTER III

#### DE GAULLE INVENTS THE ARMOURED DIVISION

IN ITSELF THE tank was not a novelty. Its value had already been established in World War I. Many infantrymen, like the author of

this book, saw it supporting shock troops and helping them to reduce enemy machine-gun nests. But De Gaulle did not confine the tank to this limited use or turn it into a kind of domestic animal tagging at the infantry's heels. He envisaged it freed from infantry, autonomous, fighting its own battles at high speed along a front of great depth.

The professional army of to-morrow [he said] will move entirely on caterpillar treads. Each unit of troops and services will travel over mountains and through valleys in the right kind of vehicle. Each man, each cannon, each shell, each loaf of bread will be brought up in this way. A large unit will be able to break camp at daybreak and be fifty leagues away by nightfall. It will need only an hour to cover ten miles through all kinds of terrain to take up its battle position opposite the enemy or break away and disappear out of range of fire and field glasses. Yet this speed would be useless by itself ; along with it must be developed such power in fire and assault that the unit fights at the same pitch at which it moves. What would be the use in moving with great rapidity up to the outskirts of the battlefield and then be immobilized ? Thanks to the armoured car, modern technique has found a solution to the problem. By developing to the full even greater possibilities in this direction it will be possible to save our picked troops from the danger of fixity of fronts, which marred the last war from the point of view of military tactics and later revealed its evils in the casualty lists and the final results.

Six divisions of the line [remember these words were written in 1934], completely motorized and mounted on treads, partially armoured, will constitute an army sufficient to decide the issue. It will be a unit whose front, whose depth, methods of protection and supply will allow it to operate independently. Any given one of these six big divisions, moreover, will be equipped with everything it needs in arms and services to carry on a battle from beginning to end.

The make-up of each division may be set forth as follows : one heavily armoured brigade, moving as fast as cavalry at full gallop, armed with 150 guns of medium calibre, 400 of lesser calibre, and 600 machine guns. It will be capable of crossing trenches 9 feet wide, surmounting hillocks 30 feet high, felling fully grown trees, knocking down walls 12 bricks thick, cutting through barbed-wire networks, railings, or barriers. That's the way present-day industry can equip each division of the professional army. This brigade of two regiments, one of heavy tanks, one of medium tanks, with a reconnaissance battalion of very fast, light machines equipped with the most up-to-date materials for liaison, observation, and field work, will constitute the capital echelon of the large unit.

One brigade of infantry will be organized into two regiments and a battalion of scouts ; armed with 50 auxiliary pieces, an

equal number of anti-tank guns, 600 machine guns, both heavy and light ; equipped with special tools for the rapid construction of trenches and dugouts ; fitted out with properly coloured uniforms, with tarpaulins, netting, and other means of camouflage in such fashion as to present to the sight and consequently to attack only the most vague of outlines. They will be used to consolidate, by occupation, mopping-up, and organization of the terrain what the tremendous but transitory power of the tanks will have brought virtually under control.

The concentrated fire power of the tank and infantry brigades of the division working in co-ordination is mobile, but it is of necessity extemporaneous and of short range. It must be reinforced at the greatest distance possible by another and more accurate fire power. That is the duty of the artillery. . . . There will be two regiments, one equipped with heavy, short guns, the other with lighter, long-range pieces. Complemented by an anti-aircraft unit they will form a strong brigade capable of laying down at fifteen minutes' notice 100 tons of shells to a depth of 10 kilometres beyond the front.

The division thus disposed in three complementary brigades, reinforced by a battalion of engineers to build roads, bridges, and so on, and a communications battalion, will have at its disposal a reconnaissance unit for scouting purposes. This unit will be composed of very speedy whippet tanks, of supporting troops prepared to fight on foot, and light vehicles for carrying out liaison work at a distance. The whole unit will be qualified to feel out the enemy, to hold a front temporarily, to shift rapidly to cover a flank briefly, and to fight rearguard action in the event of a retreat.

The main unit will be supported by squadrons of planes assigned especially to a definite general, fighting in conjunction with the same body of troops, lengthening the range of artillery with which they are thoroughly familiar instead of acting, as in the past, more or less haphazardly as unattached units.

However, despite the speed, the protection, and the flexibility that fighters gain through the use of motors, armour, and caterpillar treads they remain conspicuous targets because of the very nature of their organization. The size of engines, their noise, the marks of their exhaust, will be such that unless proper precautions are taken their approach will be obvious to the enemy. And it is of paramount importance to take him by surprise. For this reason systematic methods of camouflage will have to be set up. The art of camouflage, which is as old as war itself and which was widely but inconsistently used during the last war, must become an element of manœuvre as important as fire and mobility. It is impossible to exaggerate the results that can be obtained in this respect through research and intelligent application. Specifically the colouring of uniforms and equipment to

make them blend with the countryside, the creation of optical illusions, the alteration of the colour of objects in relation to distance, position, and light are all in their infancy. And silence could be easily obtained with a little application to the proper construction of engines and equipment. Smoke screens, clouds, and fogs of any required size, thickness, and location could be created to meet any given situation. But you can't stop at making yourself invisible and noiseless. You still have to be able to trick the enemy by creating false clues : sham columns, false earthworks and positions, fake lights, artificial noises, counterfeit radio messages. A camouflage battalion, specialists in this kind of work and equipped with all the means necessary for military trickery, even up to simulating the existence of a whole army, will be attached to each division.

To the fighting unit formed by the six main divisions will be attached a light division for reconnaissance and patrol work. It will be of the same general type as the others but equipped with faster, consequently lightly armoured, machines, lighter artillery, and infantry rendered more mobile by the possession of a smaller number of auxiliary pieces. Finally there will be a general reserve force consisting of a brigade of very heavy tanks capable of attacking permanent positions, a brigade of artillery of very heavy calibre, a regiment of engineers, a communications regiment, a camouflage regiment, a regiment of scouting planes, pursuit troops, and the usual supply services. This will complete the army of assault.

This army will have, compared to the troops France put in the field in 1914, a fire power three times greater, virtually ten times more speed, infinitely greater protection. If you keep in mind that it will normally operate on a front ten times shorter and that the professional soldiers will get wonderful efficiency out of their equipment you will get some idea of the power that the professional army of to-morrow will be able to wield at any given point.

This mechanical system with terrific potential fire power on land and in the air, assault force, speed, and camouflage needs relatively little money and few men for its operation. A hundred thousand men was the effective strength of the Reichswehr in 1919 and is the size of the regular armies of America and the British Isles. All the Governments of France from Henry IV on have kept a minimum permanent force of the same size. And an army of this size is the cheapest safeguard that could ever be offered a great nation.

#### DE GAULLE PROCLAIMS THE END OF CONTINUOUS FRONTS, THE RESTORATION OF MOBILITY, AND THE DOMINATING ROLE OF AVIATION

As soon as he had conceived the army of assault De Gaulle arrived at the logical conclusion : Before a force so mobile, continuous fronts

can no longer exist. They may be broken anywhere at the will of the possessor of mechanized forces without any chance of successful counter-attack. An army of foot soldiers whose front is pierced will never be able to reform their lines against a mechanized enemy for the simple reason that it moves five times more slowly.

A division of 1917 [De Gaulle pointed out] needed six days to bring up the 10,000 tons of material it required for battle. The new type of division will do the same job in a single night. Moreover when the main attacking force is composed of armoured units it will not be necessary to maintain contact with the enemy positions. The attacking body will remain under cover out of range of even the heaviest fire until the right moment and will deliver the final attack only under cover of darkness or smoke screens. Finally since they will themselves be equipped with formidable artillery they will be able to dispense with the barrage. All the preliminary actions that formerly warned the enemy holding a position will not be present, and he will be kept in uncertainty until the moment when the armoured tanks burst upon his lines. Surprise, the age-old queen of military art, which has lain on the ash heap so long as armies had power but no speed, will find a new instrument and consequently will recover her powers.

As a result there will be a rebirth of the war of movement. Always very precise in technical matters, Colonel de Gaulle could upon occasion give free rein to his imagination in following the consequences of his calculations. Here is how he described the onslaught of the tanks :

Well in the rear the tanks draw up in battle formation. They are usually arranged in three lines. In front the light cars that will make the first contact with the enemy. Next the real battle line made up of medium and heavy tanks whose front and depth are determined by the nature of the operation in hand and the estimated resistance. Finally the reserve line prepared for relief or follow-up. Each line is made up of sections arranged in order. Ordinarily the objective of the division will cover, including the spaces between, a terrain no more than five miles wide. Each unit will be as large as necessary to accomplish the objective. The whole organization is made up of five or six waves of tanks, of which the strongest is usually the first in the battle line. If, for example, the army engages four divisions, two thousand tanks drawn up along a twenty-mile front are ready to go into action at one and the same time.

Suddenly the monsters are unleashed. The light tanks, springing away from the base, rush forward to make contact with the enemy. Their business is to determine the position and the quality of the first line of resistance, to explore the most favourable approaches, to camouflage by smoke screen the difficult passages,

in short to reconnoitre and act as cover for the main body. When they have fulfilled their objectives the small tanks will disengage and make for the flanks for observation purposes or go to the rear to lay down reconnaissance lines. At each lull in the battle they will take up again their duty as scouts in the vanguard.

But now the main battle line in its turn feels its way into the struggle. The large groups of which it is composed deploy over the terrain not in straight lines but in independent sections, manoeuvring according to the situation of the moment. The axis of their advance in most cases will be oblique to the enemy front so as to meet any resisting force at a slant and be free to change their direction many times according to the progress of the battle. These highly mobile units machine-gun the terrain, saving their large guns for predetermined objectives, which they try to destroy by taking them from the rear. Each movement is designed to flank enemy firing units, to attack them from behind, the artillery covering the action by fire distributed all around the zone of attack and hiding by smoke screen the tanks that remain stationary.

At the same time the forward movement must not be slowed up too much by mopping-up operations. So the elements in the van must be used just long enough to effect a break-through and push on toward the ultimate objective as quickly as possible. Their support will finish what they have started. If the support isn't strong enough the reserves will finish up. As a last resort the infantry regiments will complete the consolidation. In short if the enemy puts up a stubborn resistance the attacking units will present themselves in the guise of groups of tanks fighting in great depth while the first wave continues toward its objective and the artillery encompasses not only the outer edges of the engagement but certain sections of the interior that will have been passed already.

Isn't that precisely the disposition of the battles of May and June, 1940? Nothing is missing from the picture, not even the responsibility of aviation. De Gaulle was perfectly clear on this point :

A battle planned in this way makes complete use of aircraft. With troops that rely on surprise and speed, aeroplanes act at all points not only as auxiliaries but as integral branches of the attacking force. At any given moment, to direct the movements of tanks to the points where they are most needed, to direct artillery fire to the most pivotal points, to indicate the spots where reserves are most urgently needed, there is nothing comparable to aviation that can pick up the enemy from a great distance as well as indicate the position of friendly units. It has reached the point where the aeroplane will really enable the High Command to get personal knowledge of every military situation ; and light planes, capable of landing anywhere, should be attached

to every staff. But above all, because it will be able independently to strike directly and effectively at any target, aviation becomes a superlatively efficient arm that co-ordinates best with the capacities for break-through and follow-up of the mechanized units.

What can one do but sympathize with an officer who thinks and expresses himself so clearly ; a man who knows countries and people, both the French and the German ; who is aware of the weaknesses of our frontier, the necessities of modern life, and military science itself so thoroughly that he was able to predict, several years in advance, the form the next war would take and give warning of the inevitable defeat unless the measures he advocated were taken. He was specific on every point : the lines along which the enemy would approach, his methods of attack, and the reasons why our troops were in danger of being broken up. He foresaw how they would act on the field of battle, slow masses of men manœuvring on foot, without arms suitable for dealing with tanks and thousands of planes, ready, as they were overwhelmed, to yell treason—and who could really blame them ?

If he had been listened to, the situation would have been reversed. France would have been protected and the enemy destroyed.

But against the indifference of administrations and politicians and the somnolence of septuagenarian army chiefs these ideas, so clear and so closely reasoned in their logic, were dissipated. That wasn't all. They evoked a current of hostility against this officious army officer who had the presumption to try to change the old system.

De Gaulle found out soon enough that he had to make a choice between a comfortable career and a struggle to establish his ideas. He had just been promoted colonel. Two roads were open to him. He could keep his mouth shut, conform to the prevailing notions, and be assured of an uneventful future. He could on the other hand develop further his revolutionary doctrine, widening, of course, the gulf between him and his superiors. He did not hesitate. Since the army insisted on shutting its eyes and its ears to the plain facts he set himself to winning over civilians who could, in their turn, convince the army.

For all that he felt no bitterness toward the army on this point. He even found some excuse for its resistance to the idea of mechanization.

The army [he said] is by nature unsympathetic to change. Not that those in its service have no sense of progress. It would be easy to demonstrate on the contrary that among all existing institutions the army has the largest contingent of thoughtful men, of men of science and action. But the open-mindedness of individuals does not preclude conservatism in the body as a whole. The army lives on stability, conformity, and tradition. Instinctively it fears anything that tends to modify its structure.

He obeyed these rules scrupulously even when he thought them at fault. Soldier that he was he knew nothing of politics. But he set out to find among the members of Parliament the right man to give publicity to his theory. That's how he came to meet Paul Reynaud. De Gaulle hoped that Reynaud would prove to be the man he was looking for. Reynaud hoped so himself, and he worked courageously to that end.

#### CHAPTER IV

### WHY FRANCE DID NOT HAVE ARMOURED DIVISIONS

HE IS AN intelligent, lively, self-confident little man, a little man who talks well and who knows how to listen too. He bridles easily, his body arched, swaying back slightly from the hips, his thumbs hooked in the armholes of his vest. He's a tiny man filled with great ambition, at once strong and weak, tricky and innocent, brave and unstable. That's Paul Reynaud.

A lawyer by profession, he became a financial expert in the *Chambre des Députés*. Inclined by temperament toward moderate politics, he conceived, during the war of 1940, the desire to play the heroic role of the Clemenceau of 1918. Unfortunately his acts were not as strong as his ideas. But no one can take away from Reynaud the credit for having appreciated the value of the theories of General de Gaulle. What's more, he adopted them and made them his own.

From 1934 to 1939, scarcely a month passed without the two men meeting, sometimes at Paul Reynaud's house, at 47 rue du Faubourg St.-Honoré, sometimes at his office, at No. 5 of the ancient and provincial Place du Palais Bourbon, behind the Chamber of Deputies. At De Gaulle's impatient ring the maid of the smallest minister in France would run to the door to admit the tallest colonel in France. Arms swinging, De Gaulle would stride on his long legs into the presence of Reynaud, who had summoned him for a consultation. He brought to bear a very exact and realistic set of ideas on the needs of the army and also on matters of foreign policy having to do with our military strength. His aims could always be expressed in a few words : to make France capable of playing in the world the part to which her greatness entitles her. Reynaud valued, indeed he had great admiration for the keenness of mind and the intellectual boldness of this impassioned soldier.

"De Gaulle is a man of spirit," he would say later. And he would add, smiling, "He's got too God-damned much spirit."

Certainly Colonel de Gaulle needed plenty of spirit to overcome the two opponents he had picked for himself. He wanted to create an army that could stop Hitler. And that was a hard job ! But before he could do this he had to gain the consent of his chiefs : he had to

take by storm the French General Staff. And it was a tough position too !

De Gaulle says himself that the army of a great nation must of necessity be conservative. The heads of so important a machine cannot let themselves be heedlessly swept to and fro by new ideas. But it's all a matter of balance. Respect for the past, distrust of novelty, the desire to go forward only when the path is clear and smooth ought not to lead to a refusal to grow or to something like a creeping paralysis.

Reynaud was aware of the danger. De Gaulle's advanced technical ideas became the substance of his books and speeches. Backed up by his friend and faithful collaborator, Gaston Palewski, he undertook a strong campaign to put the soldier's ideas into effect. The first task the three men set themselves was to influence public opinion and Parliament by warning them of the danger. Sometimes they worked together in the office on the second floor of No. 5 Place du Palais Bourbon. The windows at the back of the house overlooked the gardens of the Ministry of War, where the die-hard enemies of all-out mechanization ruled supreme : Daladier, Pétain, General Maurin. Thus the new army of France was struggling for birth in the very sight of the old-fashioned army that insisted on living beyond its day. It was a silent drama, heavy with forebodings of dire consequences, playing itself out in this old Quartier St. Germain near the banks of the Seine, at the two ends of a lawn bordered with chestnut trees.

Each time De Gaulle passed through Paris he got in touch with Reynaud and Palewski, who constituted, with Deputy Philippe Serre on their left, his active political wing. Whenever their confabs ran over into mealtimes and Reynaud had to think of the many obligations of political life, Palewski and the colonel would go to have lunch or dinner in a restaurant in the neighbourhood, most often at Drouant's or the Hotel Lutetia, on the Boulevard Raspail, where De Gaulle always stopped. Over the table they kept weaving their conspiracy for armoured units, constantly preparing ammunition for the parliamentary battles waged by the Boss, Reynaud.

Reynaud delivered his most famous speech on military matters during the debate on the budget of 1935. He demanded the enlistment of a picked body of pilots, sharpshooters, and mechanics to man half a score of armoured divisions, each one at least five hundred tanks strong and reinforced by powerful artillery, anti-aircraft units, and aviation.

Let us assume [he said] that war breaks out to-morrow and Belgium is invaded. It wouldn't be the first time. If we have not the means to go immediately to her aid and help her cover her eastern frontier what will happen ? What is likely to happen is what has already happened before. It's not impossible that the Belgian army might be driven into the sea. For us that would mean 350 kilometres of unprotected frontier to defend in the

north of France. Is there anyone here who is willing to face the idea of seeing the richest provinces of France once more invaded and torn from the body of the fatherland ?

On his side in this debate, which was so full of significance for the future war, Paul Reynaud had not only the patriotic feeling but also the instinctive sympathy of his fellow members of Parliament. After all a demand for materials rather than for men would make a fine talking point among the voters. However, he failed to carry the debate. What went wrong ?

As soon as Reynaud had finished his speech General Maurin, the elderly Minister of War, turned toward his commissioner, who was a general representing the point of view of the Supreme War Council. This officer made vigorous signs of disapproval. General Maurin then took the floor and said to Paul Reynaud. "Your proposals for offensive action are out of order. Our whole plan of mobilization is based on the principle of defence."

These words, which revealed all too much, were printed in the *Journal Officiel*. A few months later Hitler, although incompletely armed, was to invade the Rhineland, which was demilitarized by the Treaty of Versailles.

From the gallery Colonel de Gaulle was following the debate. "It will be harder than we thought," he said to Palewski, "but the seed of the idea implanted in Reynaud's speech will sprout all the same."

Reynaud developed his and De Gaulle's theories in the rebuttal that he filed with the office of the Chamber and in his two books : *The French Military Problem* and *Youth, Which France Do You Choose?* Both works sounded constantly the *leit-motiv* of armoured divisions.

The efforts of Reynaud and De Gaulle went down to defeat under the laziness of mind and the strong prejudices of the majority of men in high place. Many objections that were more numerous than sound were invoked against the idea of armoured divisions : the industrial and financial factors involved in construction of the tanks, the difficulty of refuelling them on the field of battle, the obstacles they would encounter in rough terrain and bad weather.

Even on the very eve of war, when Reynaud had proved that the Germans had adopted De Gaulle's proposals point by point, his detractors trotted out the principle that 'France is the land of balance' and that she should avoid involving her army in 'excessive mechanization.'

One of our great military leaders declared, "De Gaulle's project is nothing but mental gymnastics." Another, more severe, added, "It's downright villainous," because it implied criticism of the existing army.

De Gaulle kept his head and his good temper. "I know they'll come to it sooner or later. If it just isn't too late!"

In fact, Reynaud's hopes went down along with De Gaulle's. And yet De Gaulle had perceived clearly the outlines of modern warfare. He had learned its secrets. He had defined the kind of army that might decide the rulership of the world and that could save it for the peaceful nations. The army he envisaged lay precisely within the scope of the skill of the French nation. It pre-supposed machines, of great mechanical perfection to be sure, but restricted in number, and depended for their construction on the automobile industry, which in France was very highly developed. It called for a force of picked men, brave, hard-working, resourceful—but those in relatively small numbers. And this small number of Frenchmen would be able to stand up to a large number of enemies. It would have been for France a great, a unique opportunity for triumphant action. But none of that was understood.

If France had possessed in March, 1936, the six armoured divisions proposed in the rebuttal filed with the Chamber by Paul Reynaud, Hitler would never have dared march his army into the demilitarized Rhineland. If Hitler had been balked in that display of force Mussolini would not have dared involve himself so completely with him. The attacks against Vienna, Prague, and Warsaw would have been impossible. Impossible, too, the descent on Paris in May, 1940. The whole face of history would have been changed.

But France didn't have the armoured divisions.

## CHAPTER V

### LAST WARNING

ON THE THIRD of September, 1939, the war broke out. Colonel de Gaulle saw in action a modern army making full use of armoured units and squadrons of planes whose speed and fire power crumbled even the most courageous defender. De Gaulle's vision had come to life, his dream was true, his calculations were proved exactly right. But the army revealed by the war was not a French army. It was the German army, overwhelming our Polish allies.

When I say that De Gaulle's ideas had come to life I do not speak idly. Each German armoured division, each panzer division comprised :

- a reconnaissance unit composed of machine-gun cars, motor-cycle units, and infantry carried by truck ;
- a brigade of 540 tanks ;
- a brigade of mechanized infantry, with abundant field artillery and anti-tank and anti-aircraft units ;
- a regiment of 105 howitzers, motorized ;
- an engineering regiment ;
- a camouflage battalion.

De Gaulle had predicted precisely the same set-up except that he had foreseen 500 tanks instead of 540 for each division, and an artillery regiment of 75's in addition to the regiment of 105's.

Thus the German war technique had been based directly on the French theories that our High Command had ignored. Thus we went into battle against weapons imagined by our own genius, against weapons that we could have had far in advance of the Germans if we had not cut them off from ourselves. It's not hard to imagine De Gaulle's thoughts when he was faced with this situation, the feelings he must have experienced during this beginning of the war.

He was put in command of the tank brigade of the 5th French Army on the Alsatian front. It would have been easy for him to take refuge in the traditional army silence. He could have given up the struggle and ignored the tremendous events shaping up around him. Instead he fought even harder.

During the long period of inaction that followed the defeat of Poland in September, 1939, numerous French and English statesmen, including numerous military functionaries, were delighted with the lack of action on our front. We should not, they thought, try anything that will bring on more action. Our only concern was to bring our armaments up to par. 'Time was on our side' because the Germans could never break our fortifications. And when the proper time came we would crush them.

| It was a presumptuous set of ideas. Was time really on our side ? And were the Germans really unable to flatten our defences before we were ready to attack them ? At best it was highly dubious.

If only we had manufactured arms at high speed, dug in, trained our troops to cope with modern armaments ! But the complacency that arose from our optimism also made everybody concerned take his time. The country was producing first-rate materials but on a pitifully slow schedule. In certain sectors we had impregnable fortifications, but in the sectors that were still exposed the building up of defences went ahead too slowly or not at all. The army stayed put, motionless and grandly determined to alter none of its methods.

Our artillery was superior to the German. It was superior in numbers, better trained, better commanded. But leaving aside the fact that it lacked heavy shells for use against fortifications, it was in no wise equipped for rapid movement. It was an artillery in the style of 1918.

We also lacked anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank artillery, and munitions or both branches.

Our bomber squadrons, which were fine from the point of view of personnel, were lacking in modern equipment. And the same was true of our aviation for reconnaissance and observation. Only our fighter units had some up-to-date equipment at their disposal, and they got magnificent results from it.

Our tanks were the best of all, obviously superior in every category to the German tanks of the same tonnage. The B2 thirty-ton tank

equipped with 75's was extremely successful in battle. But we had, all told, scarcely two thousand tanks of modern construction, and those few were doled out among the various units. It was impossible to bring them together for mass action even if the High Command had granted the necessity for such procedure.

In short, our army was badly equipped with arms and munitions for offence. It was also badly equipped for defence against tanks and planes. It was piteously lacking in aeroplanes and mechanized ground units making for rapid movement over all kinds of terrain. Above all, and it is worth repeating, it had less tanks and used them less skilfully than the enemy. It was a good enough army, disciplined and brave, but it was heavy and slow—as obsolete in equipment as it was in ideas.

The German army, on the other hand, was the most modern in the world. The ideas along which its methods and armaments were conceived were so bold and so novel that a well-equipped enemy could very well have taken advantage of their very rashness. It would have been possible to surround and destroy columns that advanced far ahead of the main body. Offensives undertaken by the German armoured division without sufficient artillery and infantry support could have been cut off and crushed. It would have been easy to hamper the enormous convoys of oil supplies desperately needed by mechanized units. But we were without the proper means to effect any of those counter-actions.

Since he understood the threat so well Colonel de Gaulle was aware during the autumn and winter of 1939–40, of the danger inherent in the false security of the Allies innocently parked behind the Maginot Line. He thought, and many young officers thought with him, that we should have, from the fifteenth of September, moved across Belgium to attack the Ruhr. In spite of the terrible gaps in our offensive apparatus we could have gained a foothold on the left bank of the Rhine. While the main body of Hitler's army was in action in Poland we could have raised hell with the few German divisions left to hold the lines opposite us.

We could have occupied the enemy's richest industrial regions. Then we would have been able to acquire superiority of arms over him, those arms, whether aviation or armoured divisions, which are to-day the indispensable instruments of victory.

But action of this sort would have implied a strong will to fight. No such willingness to accept the risks of war was apparent in France, either in the Press or in the Government's official pronouncements or in our generals' orders-of-the-day. For various reasons we seemed to prefer to remain on the fringes of war rather than plunge boldly into it. Whole units in certain sectors were ordered not to fire unless they were attacked. The artillery was held in check to prevent reprisals against such and such a city, this or that factory. The process of mining the Rhine was put off. We did not fire on the trains that daily rolled their wagons by in hundreds within range of our artillery and

even of our infantry guns before our Neuf Brisach lines in Alsace, carrying German coal to Italy.

Of course, there were plenty of excuses for putting off action. We wanted to improve our armaments. We wanted to wait until new allies joined the cause. Unfortunately such delays are worthless unless they are justified by action. The advantages of such tactics must be demonstrated in concrete terms ; otherwise they are not intelligible to the people or to the men in the ranks. So we are stalling for time to build up our defences ? All right, build with some enthusiasm and demonstrate your determination to use your armaments to the hilt once you've forged them. War is a terrible game that can't be played half-heartedly. Otherwise the public gets confused and indifferent. And then if the enemy takes the offensive he finds the defenders softened up in advance.

We were preparing our offensive for 1941. But who could tell that Hitler wouldn't attack us in 1940 ? Where were all the tanks and planes manufactured during the time the enemy was being stalled off ? Couldn't the army have been trained in this very winter of 1939-40 to make a showing against attacks by dive bombers and armoured divisions in accordance with the methods the Germans had used in Poland ? Where, most important of all, was our will to win, our will to be victorious ; victorious and at peace this time, not for twenty short years but for a whole century ?

Colonel de Gaulle realized all that. But what could he do ? Nothing except appeal to his superiors.

On the twenty-sixth of January, 1940, after five months of 'phony' war, he submitted to the High Command, through the traditional channels, a magnificent and terrible memorandum. It was terrible for those who received it, because it contained, clearly analysed, the elements of the danger we were in and the only methods of saving the day.

France, conquered, has never been allowed to know about this document, which is a rehabilitation of her military genius. Up to this point foreign countries have had no knowledge of it either.

De Gaulle began by urging his superiors not to rely on the immobility of the enemy. The Germans, he insisted, will apply to France the same methods they found so successful in Poland in September, 1939. The only thing holding them back is the problem of adapting their material to the strength of France and to the conditions of war in our country. They were multiplying their complement of armoured units to take full advantage of our superb system of roads, because they considered us better equipped in this respect than the Poles. They were reducing the number of their horses, dispensing particularly with those that drew the two cannon of 105's attached to every infantry battalion during the war in Poland. They were strengthening their air force.

Colonel de Gaulle wanted the French High Command to be aware

of these preparations on the part of the enemy. He was anxious that we should not mistake his temporary immobility for impotence. Surprise, he thought, especially technical surprise, could be worked in the midst of a war as easily as when it began, and he was afraid that the German offensive would catch us wholly unawares.

It has been proved [the colonel wrote in his memorandum] that mechanized force is intrinsically endowed with power, mobility and means of protection that are literally beyond compare. Consequently mechanization constitutes the essential instrument of manœuvre, of surprise, and of assault. In modern warfare no effective action is possible except by means of mechanized force.

Up to the present neither one of the opponents has had the sense to elevate mechanical force into a deliberate, well-equipped system organized in such a fashion as to build hopes of victory on it alone. Of course both sides have at their disposition tanks and planes, but they are so small in numbers, so restricted in power, and used so timidly that they would be useless against enemy fortifications. Each side, instead of creating a new instrument of warfare, has limited itself to an attempt to integrate the new elements offered by motorization into the prevailing system. For that reason their use of motorization, though it may allow episodic and fragmentary activity, does not draw fully on the opportunities for complete action made possible by the very nature of motorization.

In this respect the Germans, it must be admitted, have had glimmers of a rational conception of warfare. Consequently they began the present war with a fairly strong contingent of dive bombers and several large armoured divisions whose combined action allowed them to crush Poland, an important military state of 35,000,000 inhabitants, in two weeks. Similar action will enable them to seize, to-morrow, all the territory they might want in Rumania, Sweden, Russia, or Asia Minor. But the restricted number of aeroplanes and the insufficiently heavy tanks that the Reich can at present put in the field would not be enough to break French resistance, based as it is on the system of fortifications and barriers of the Maginot Line. Moreover there is every reason to believe that Hitler's government now bitterly regrets that it did not subject its army to a more radical transformation.

No one, with any show of reason, can doubt that if on the first of September Germany had had at its disposal only twice as many planes, a thousand hundred-ton tanks, three thousand thirty- or fifty-ton tanks, six thousand ten- to twenty-ton tanks she would have destroyed France.

On our side, because we are more firmly attached than ever to old-fashioned notions, we entered the war with five million soldiers, but our air force was still in the embryonic stage and our tanks were woefully deficient in both number and power. What's more,

what modern force we had was built, organized, and intended not at all to strike far, swift, and strong but on the contrary to act only as support for the infantry and in concert with it.

So, where our aviation was concerned, the only force we had was our pursuit planes, more accurately described as a covering force. And as far as armoured elements went we had at our disposal practically nothing but light tanks whose principal function was to be parcelled out in small units among the infantry.

Consequently we were completely incapable of bringing to our eastern allies any aid whatsoever, direct or indirect as the case might be. The very same military conditions that on the seventh of March, 1936, forced us into immobility, that kept us completely inert again at the time of the annexation of Austria, and that forced us in March, 1939, to abandon the Czechs, led us fatally last September [1939] to watch from a distance the German attack on Poland without being able to do anything except follow the triumphant march of the enemy on the map. . . .

In all truth the conception of the nation in arms which, by itself, admits strictly only of defence action seemed up to the beginning of the present war to be justified, particularly in relation to the idea of a pacifist France whose main military problem consisted of safeguarding its own territory. In fact that is the function to which the important laws of 1927 and 1928 limited the military organization of the country. Provided that we isolate ourselves from the rest of the world it was a tenable idea that we could restrict our military activity to manning our fortifications. By holding our active population immobile under arms, by fixing the whole fate of France in concrete, by emptying our towns and villages of their inhabitants under the pretext of defending them, in short by adopting once and for all the kind of strategy that consists of enduring attack without returning it we might perhaps have been able, in the long run, to maintain the outline of our frontiers intact. But what could be the result in the long run ?

In fact if the enemy hasn't been able yet to build a mechanized force strong enough to break our lines of defence there is every reason to believe that he's working at it. The brilliant successes that he won in Poland, thanks to motorized fighting units, have only confirmed him in his determination to go ahead fully along the new way. Now we must realize that the Maginot Line, whatever reinforcements it may have received or may receive in the future, however much artillery and infantry may occupy it or support it, can be broken. In the long run that is the fate in store for all fortifications. In the case of the Maginot Line it happens that the appropriate method of attack is already virtually in existence. At this very moment industrial and technical resources exist capable of building tanks that, used in masses as they should be used, could overcome our mobile and stationary defences. The machines only need armour plate, proper weapons, and mobility ;

all of these attributes can be given them along with high enough tonnage.

In the struggle between tanks and fortresses there has come about a transposition in the traditional conditions of battle between cannon and armour plate. In the olden days, given any kind of stronghold, a cannon to destroy it—even if one of 420 calibre was needed—always made its appearance. In the same way, to-day, tanks can easily be built capable of overcoming any known fixed positions. In this domain a mass of armoured cars supported by an equal number of planes has an enormous advantage, over artillery, of easy and quick concentration, dispersal and action, and the ability to follow through speedily in great depth. On the other hand, big guns require a long time for emplacement, establishment of munitions supply, and preparation for firing. Furthermore, they cannot themselves follow up the effect of their own fire. When it comes to immediate movement beyond enemy dispositions, which is easy for tanks and planes, artillery is totally impotent. Briefly the destruction of fortifications can, because of the existence of motorized units, have the character of surprise, speed, tactical and strategic consequences completely at variance with the usual slow operations formerly consequent on the use of artillery.

The result is that any defensive force that relied on static resistance of the older type would be doomed to destruction. Only mechanized force is able to break mechanized force. The indispensable condition for modern defence involves the heavy counter-attack by squadrons of planes and ground forces against an enemy more or less disorganized by the destruction of fixed positions. Even though we had decided to limit our military action to our farthest frontier it was still absolutely necessary to create an instrument of assault, manœuvre, and speed.

But would such indifference to what might go on beyond our frontiers be conceivable in the present war? France has always had to use her strength to maintain the balance of power in Europe. If that balance is upset at present the reason is to be found, obviously, in our refusal to act. If our inaction continues there is nothing to prevent the indefinite expansion of the power of the enemy. So long as they are sure of being left inviolate behind the Siegfried Line the Germans will have, in the immediate future as in the immediate past, full licence to expend their efforts elsewhere. But how could the little promontory at the very edge of Europe, which is our country, maintain itself intact when faced with a conqueror who had seized all the resources of Europe in addition to his own? It's evident that already the subjection of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland has increased by a third the industrial strength of the Reich. By subjugating Hungary, Rumania, and the Ukraine, Germany could double its agricultural resources. And when it comes to raw materials it has almost

everything in its grasp : iron from Sweden, nickel from Norway and Finland, cotton from Turkestan, oil from the Balkans, the Caucasus, or Iran.

In the present conflict, as in all those that have preceded it, inertia spells defeat. To put ourselves in a position to act, not merely submit, we must create a new military instrument. Mechanization on land, in the air, and on the sea would put us in a position to protect ourselves from eventual attack by Germany. Even more, it would enable us to seize bases for supply and attack, expel her from the areas she has already conquered, blockade her, bombard her—in short attack her from all sides at once.

This memorandum, De Gaulle's final warning, had the same fate as its predecessors. He sent a copy of it to Paul Reynaud, who was trying at that time, from his position as Minister of Finance, to stage a come-back. Reynaud was deeply worried by the sluggishness of the war effort in general and of industry in particular. Gaston Palewski, chief of his ministerial staff, shared his anxiety, and all the more because he had heard of certain threatening conspiracies. Under the pretext of 'technical arrangements' already in the making was the *coup d'état* of the bigwigs that was to come boldly out into the open with the armistice.

Reynaud and his right-hand man were trying to effect a coalition among different elements in Parliament that would bring Reynaud into power despite the opposition of the Radical Socialist group—headed by Edouard Daladier—despite, that is, the opposition of the Centre.

Palewski had kept up contact with Colonel de Gaulle. He discussed with him the form the new administration should take. De Gaulle was pumping for the creation of a 'Ministry for the Prosecution of the War,' which would combine the functions of the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He was anxious to see an energetic minister get the power to combat the prevalent inertia and defeatism. A part of the correspondence between Palewski and De Gaulle, particularly a letter from De Gaulle, was sequestered by the mail censor and put into the hands of the Prime Minister and Minister of War, Edouard Daladier. The latter had, for the past five years, identified himself with the High Command, whose obsolete armament policies Colonel de Gaulle and Reynaud opposed. Daladier felt his position threatened. His relations with Paul Reynaud, already cool enough, grew worse. At that moment, in order to lessen the tension between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Palewski was asked to give up his position as the latter's chief of staff. Daladier and Reynaud were officially reconciled, and Daladier, by a decree of the National Defence Council, gave Reynaud an active part in the conduct of military affairs.

A simple check of the foreign-exchange budgets of the various Cabinet departments concerned with national defence reveals the

accuracy of De Gaulle's criticisms. The High Command never made forthright and absolute statements on the requirements in materials for the entire army. Instead of a comprehensive budget representing a synthesis of the needs of all branches of the armed forces in relation to the total military plans of the High Command, the Ministry of War was receiving from the latter and hence could transmit to the Ministry of Finance only a simple schedule of the demands of the different branches of the army, each arrived at without relationship to the others. There was no central principle that fused together the demands for material set forth by the different departments—bombers, pursuit planes, artillery, infantry, engineers, tanks, and so on—in line with a general conception of the conduct of the war. It is clear that De Gaulle's idea of a Ministry for the Prosecution of the War was only too justified by actual conditions. A decree addressed by Daladier to the National Defence Council assuring closer collaboration between the High Command and the Ministry of Finance marked a first step in the right direction. It was a step in De Gaulle's direction too. Unfortunately this decree was never put into effect.

For that and many other reasons the French were not able to use the last months of the static war to increase systematically the manufacture of war materials. We didn't even noticeably improve our anti-tank defences on the Belgian frontier. Nor did we organize mobile units, by regrouping into efficient bodies the existing tanks dispersed among various units of the army.

We had at our disposal three 'light mechanized divisions' formed in 1934 and four heavily armoured divisions hastily created June, 1939. Opposed to them were at least ten heavily armoured divisions on the German side, most of which had been tried out in Poland, plus an indefinite number of supporting tanks attached to the various units.

Our three light mechanized divisions—splendidly armed as such, and splendidly trained—were lost at Dunkirk along with one thousand tanks attached to them and a thousand pieces of artillery. As for the heavy armoured divisions which were held in reserve at the camp of Mourmelon near Chalons-sur-Marne, it will be seen later on that two of them were badly used. The other two, formed in the midst of battle, had been too hastily trained. Firing practice under actual conditions had not been possible, and some of the tanks were not even equipped with all their range-finding instruments when they went into battle.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROPHET IN BATTLE

THE AUTHOR OF this book went through the war of 1914 in the infantry. In 1939–40 I served first in a mechanized cavalry regiment, then in the Second Bureau of General Headquarters. From this latter post

as from a huge observatory I saw the decisive battles of May-June, 1940.

Starting with the tenth of May, the turning-point of the Battle of Belgium, the reserve officers of G.H.Q., of whom I was one, took active duty on the night watches since the regular officers in active service could no longer handle them by themselves. We took turns at telephone duty, receiving news of the armies for transmission to General Koeltz and General Doumenc—that is, to the staff of General Gamelin, which became on May 19 the staff of General Weygand.

It will be remembered that German armoured units, after forcing the Belgian lines on May 10 on the Albert Canal near Maestricht, and the French lines around Sedan on the twelfth and thirteenth, were pushing on toward the west in the general direction of Arras in a violent attempt to reach the sea and cut the Allied armies in two.

Our duties consisted in jotting down messages and tracing the results on the map. I have spent few more poignant hours in my whole life than during those endless nights in a poor suburban house at 5 rue Gambetta in Esbly-sur-Marne. The telephones reporting nothing but breaks in the front, grew into instruments of torture. We would have liked to stop up our ears and close our eyes or to go out and fight. And yet we had to keep on listening and keep on watching our defence lines slip back farther and farther.

On the night of May 14, Major G., a young officer of our colonial army, who was standing watch with me, got a call from the staff of a front-line division saying that German armoured units were about to reach Montcornet.

"It can't be Montcornet in the Aisne," he said. "That would assume that the Germans have advanced fifty kilometres in twenty-four hours. It's just unbelievable. There must be a village of the same name somewhere near Sedan."

He bent anxiously over the map.

The phone rang again. G. seized the occasion to make sure.

It was indeed Montcornet in the Aisne.

G. paled slightly and set about changing on the map the charcoal line that marked our front. Without saying anything to each other we were both aware that such an advance meant that the enemy had penetrated clear through our lines to the very rear. What had happened? What were our people up to? What kind of avalanche would have split them up that way? What was paralysing our tanks—mechanically the best in the world—and our overwhelming artillery? How could the enemy achieve this lightning-like speed that forestalled our counter-attacks?

At dawn we took to General Doumenc, at his headquarters in the Château de Montry, the melancholy sketches whose lines seemed etched on our hearts.

After those hours on night duty, when we met together at noon at the officers' mess we seemed like men awakened from nightmares. We carried on desultory conversations in the sunshine before the open

window of the dining-room of a small provincial château. This quiet dwelling housed the bureau of operations of the G.H.Q., the famous Third Bureau. The heavy noonday heat shimmered over the still park, and except for the drone of the planes flying overhead, it took great effort to realize that we were at the intellectual centre of the battle, that there was no more authentic source of information. Our superiors—majors, colonels—when they had time to come to lunch at all commented on the latest news, interpreted the movements of the enemy, hinted sometimes at the orders given to our troops. Here the shape of the future loomed large—and it was more terrible than words can describe.

In this quiet atmosphere, in the centre of a country that didn't yet know what was happening, we saw growing clearer and clearer a prospect that none of us wanted to accept : the total eclipse of France.

One morning—it was either the fifteenth or the sixteenth of May, I don't remember which—I cried : "But France still has reserves, she has resources, unoccupied terrain. It's only the middle of May. We still have possibility of manœuvre. By the thirtieth we could launch a Battle of the Marne."

"In 1940 there won't be any Battle of the Marne. The machines go too fast. It's impossible this time for our slow infantry to re-establish its lines against the tanks. Our counter-attacks are broken before they get under way, or else they strike against thin air. You can't manœuvre when you're constantly outdistanced. You can't defeat a motorized and armoured army with an army on foot."

Colonel L., who gave me my answer, had a charming face that looked at once young and ravaged, young in intelligence and enthusiasm, ravaged by grief and insomnia.

In spite of myself I argued with him : "But we have superb artillery, superior in numbers to the German and commanded by better-trained officers. Our heavy unattached artillery especially outnumbers the Germans four to one."

"Of course," L. answered gently, "but we are not fighting a war of artillery. You could almost say the Germans haven't even used theirs up to the present. And ours rarely finds objectives that stay still long enough to be shot at. Most often, while we are getting batteries into position, the enemy disappears."

"German armoured formations on the other hand, once they find a break in our infantry lines, thanks to the devastating work of dive bombers, flank the positions of our batteries and come up from the rear to slaughter the defenceless artillerymen and even the horses on the picket lines. They then go deeper, zigzagging across our rear, cutting telephone lines and surprising command headquarters at work at their desks."

"When our infantry in the front lines stop getting either orders or artillery support, they hold on for a few hours and then fall back, provided they don't turn out to be encircled. Sometimes these hap-

hazard retreats of infantry units run into movements full of refugees, which adds to the confusion.

"In the meantime the enemy armoured units decidedly cut themselves off from their bases and push ahead full speed as long as they have fuel. They reach unoccupied terrain in the rear and amble along the roads like tourists, sowing such confusion that it prevents us from even attempting to organize counter-attacks. . . . Besides, to counter-attack against armoured units you have to have armoured units—and we haven't got them. We are particularly lacking in units specially trained, specially commanded, and systematically refuelled. That can't all be thrown together in a couple of days ; and that's precisely the situation we've got to cope with now."

One by one the officers came up, wan and red-eyed. All night long they had been getting more messages telling of further French retreats, reports of French infantry attacks launched too late, and of swift drives of enemy tanks on our flanks and rear. They had translated the situation into black lines on the maps and sent the maps to the High Command with their suggestions of action. But time passed and Gamelin remained dumb in his isolated post of command in the Château de Vincennes.

All these young soldiers were fully aware of the implications of what was happening ; yet they resisted, clung desperately to hope.

Then there took place between them and the older officers arguments of epic proportions, comparable to the struggle between instinct and cold calculation.

"They are nice boys," Colonel L. said to me, "but I get exasperated with their determination to blind themselves to the plain facts. . . . Look here, if we were the same as we were in 1916, shavetails of twenty heading combat platoons in the front lines, then I might agree that the thing to do is to ignore the facts and keep ourselves pepped up with childish optimism. But since we're here at the head of things it's up to us to think the situation through. If we don't, who will ? All right, here's the way I size it up :

"The break-through begun by the Germans on May 13 is to be interpreted in these terms : The entire French army has been disrupted by five thousand enemy tanks and two thousand aeroplanes to such a point that we are in no position to launch a serious counter-offensive. These German tanks and planes are led and manned by roughly a

to pieces before the first of our foot soldiers even made contact with a single German infantryman."

Poor Colonel L., he was a first-rate technical expert. How I must have bored him with my questions. I pestered him with all the passion of a simple reserve officer who insists on hoping against hope. On his unbuttoned tunic you could count the tabs for attaching the numerous crosses he had earned since 1914 on the battlefields of France and the colonies, where he had led his adventurous career as an officer of *tirailleurs* from Morocco and Senegal. He didn't wear his crosses, but we all knew his reputation for bravery ; and it was precisely because he could speak with such authority that his pessimism disturbed us so.

He was aware of it ; and he went on more gently : "There would be grounds for hope if the intellectual, psychological, and material conditions of our army were different. We'd have to cure ourselves first of all of our old mania for shoring up the front every time it is breached. To be clear, we'd have to give up linear defence entirely and instead organize mobile units that would be based on certain positions and capable of attacking the enemy from the flank if he over-extended himself. But there you have it—to give up the linear front, concentrate reserves on secondary points, leave open pockets in the field, would all mean changing our old habits. It would take guts. Moreover we've lost the best of our motorized units really mobile enough to carry out manœuvres and flank attacks. It stayed at Dunkirk. . . . That blasted operation on the Dyle River, in Belgium, cost us dear. . . . And even at that we'd need another leader—a real leader."

Somebody said : "Weygand."

"All right," the colonel agreed, "let it be Weygand. But he'd better get here in a hurry and reorganize ruthlessly. It's already late, very late."

We wanted to go on with the argument. He went into the next room, turned on the radio to a Beethoven symphony, dropped into an armchair, threw back his head, and closed his eyes.

I have no more heart-rending memory than the sight of this man, his face discoloured with grief and vexation, shutting himself off rather than give us the word of hope for which we were so avid, hysterically avid—the word his honesty would not let him speak.

The rest of us, inexperienced, fanatical in our ignorance, were left to ourselves. A lieutenant said : "After all we must make allowances for the colonel's grief. It's his whole life's work, the work of his whole generation, he sees crumbling at this moment. The War College, the classic theories of the C.H.E.M. [Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires], the famous theories that won the victory in 1918 have been superseded by the strategy of tanks used in formation. It's the strategy that only Colonel de Gaulle advocated on our side and which the Germans adopted from him. In this disaster De Gaulle comes out triumphant."

Suddenly we heard the colonel's voice over the symphony in the next room. He was saying : "De Gaulle ? He's the only one of us who understood."

On May 15 Colonel de Gaulle was promoted to be a general, the youngest general in the French army, and that same day he was ordered to report to G.H.Q. to Major-General Doumenc.

He arrived early at the Château de Montry, which rises in a mass of pink bricks on a hill near Meaux. He went up the front steps two at a time, then he climbed an imitation medieval staricase, and then he was in the presence of the highest man in the army next to General Gamelin. A slender, wiry, greying man, General Doumenc began by revealing to his visitor the fate of the two best French heavy armoured divisions. We had just lost them through flagrant blunders in command. The first, lacking in light scouting units and planes, and moreover not having received its supplies of petrol for refuelling, had been surprised and decimated at Dinant before it could undertake the sketchiest operation. The second, sent into action piecemeal, had worn itself out without being able to deliver its full assault strength, in the Verviers sector.

These two crushing blows were no surprise to General de Gaulle, who had worked like a dog for seven years trying to warn the High Command against just such mistakes in the use of tanks.

General Doumenc then told him that he was entrusting to him the command of a new armoured division, the Fourth, to be made up from scattered elements hastily assembled and partly untrained.

The division he had in mind was to comprise two battalions of thirty tanks each of the thirty-ton model B2, two battalions of forty twelve-ton tanks, and a battalion of *chasseurs à pied*. These latter—picked infantrymen—could not be equipped with armoured all-purpose cars of the model S.O.M.U.A. prescribed by the regulations. They had at their disposal only ordinary trucks.

In addition the division included two groups of artillery, each containing sixteen 75's in lieu of heavier 105's, which were not available. It would be minus the battalion of light scouting tanks that De Gaulle had urged so strenuously in his studies, and lacking as well anti-aircraft guns and aeroplanes. In other words the division was not equipped to act alone, independently of other units. And yet that is precisely what would be expected of it. General Doumenc ordered General de Gaulle to proceed to Laon, south of Montcornet, and delay the Germans until the two French infantry divisions commanded respectively by Generals Frère and Touchon had had time to make contact.

General de Gaulle arrived at Laon on the evening of the same day, May 15. He found the place under the command of a superannuated officer having under his orders various sections of several different units. The position of the Germans before the city was not clearly defined. General de Gaulle, who had not received as yet one single unit of his division, set up his headquarters in the village of Bruyères, some six miles to the south-east of Laon.

On the morning of the sixteenth, still without his command, he went on a personal scouting tour. When he reached the bank of the irrigation canal that runs between Sissonne and Attencourt he became

the target for rifle fire, which revealed to him the presence of the Germans on the other bank. He also met some French troops, very few in number, holding the south bank of the canal. The canal itself was bordered by marshes impenetrable to tanks. The general noted this fact with interest, for it made it possible to hold the section simply by guarding the bridges over the canal. But above all he was impatient for the arrival of his troops. As it turned out they were to reach him in incomplete numbers after long delays and tired out by endless halts on roads clogged with refugees.

On the morning of the eighteenth General de Gaulle had at his disposal the two battalions of light tanks and a single battalion of B2 tanks. Of the other battalion of B2's, the infantry, and artillery—not a trace. But the general had been able to round up a few batteries scattered in the neighbourhood, and to them he entrusted the protection of the bridges over the canal and the marshes.

It was under these conditions of heroic improvisation that the attack ordered for dawn on May 18 got under way.

The light tanks moved on the villages of Sissonne and Montcornet, the heavy tanks on Chivres and St. Pierremont, to hold the bridge.

The light tanks reached the outskirts of Montcornet without too much opposition. But there they suffered heavy losses, because the Germans held the village in full force. They had to fall back to a wood to the south of the river, towards Agincourt.

During that time the B2 tanks were driving the Germans from the village of Chivres and falling on a convoy of thirty German trucks, which they completely destroyed. But when they arrived before St. Pierremont they were blocked like the light tanks before Montcornet.

At this stage of the attack the Germans attempted an assault on the flank of the Fourth Armoured Division. General de Gaulle sent against them a squadron of B2 tanks held in reserve and a battalion of infantry that had just reached him as replacements in the nick of time. The position was re-established.

The general then informed the French units near him of the considerable advance that his division had just carried out, and he asked them to form their lines on him to support him. But the heads of the units in question did not see fit to take advantage of the situation. On the other hand the Germans, alarmed by the success of the attack of the Fourth Division, sent endless waves of dive bombers against it. These had a trying effect on the morale of the men, who had already been physically worn out by all the difficulties encountered on the roads before the action started.

The bombardment from the air was followed in the late afternoon by a new German attack on the flank of the division in the direction of Laon, where there was no organized defence.

Against the attackers General de Gaulle threw a regiment of reserves that had just reached him about four o'clock. This counter-attack again forced the enemy back to its lines.

Night was falling. Since the neighbouring troops had not advanced their front and since he did not have sufficient infantry to occupy the terrain solidly General de Gaulle judged it unwise to leave his tanks beyond the canal. Consequently he fell back behind it. The results of the day had not been negligible : the German advance on Laon had been checked, and the enemy had suffered numerous casualties and the loss of important material, including the thirty trucks destroyed at Chivres. In addition one hundred and fifty prisoners had been taken. The next day, May 19, General de Gaulle received an order from General Georges (G.H.Q.) to attack beyond Laon, toward the north.

General de Gaulle then had only about twenty B2 tanks and half the light tanks left. In the course of the night he had received a few tanks as replacements, but their crews were not trained. Moreover the outlet from Laon was particularly difficult because the town is situated on a hill and the tanks had to start out along descending slopes in full view of the enemy.

In spite of all that the attack that had been ordered was launched and went ahead easily at first, until it reached the environs of the Serre River. But the Germans were strongly entrenched in the villages of Crécy and Chalandry. They had destroyed the bridges. And once more their dive bombers went into action as soon as the French attack was immobilized.

Following their usual method the Germans set an infantry counter-attack under way behind the waves of bombers. It was halted by vigorous action on the part of our foot detachments. But at six o'clock an order from General Georges reached General de Gaulle telling him not to engage himself fully for he was needed elsewhere.

Certain that he had no longer any chance of being reinforced by other detachments, General de Gaulle decided to fall back to the south of Laon in the Bruyère Forest. It was a harsh retreat during which our tanks, unsupported by planes, anti-aircraft units, or infantry, were harassed on all sides by the enemy.

And yet the Fourth Armoured Division had rendered great service. It had delayed by three days the enemy's reaching the Aisne, three days that gave Generals Frère and Touchon time to reassemble their forces and form a new line of resistance.

But these results had cost more than would have been necessary if our organization had been complete. For the lack of certain necessary materials General de Gaulle saw half his tanks damaged or destroyed.

The battle of Abbeville presented approximately the same features as that of Laon. It showed General de Gaulle getting from worn-out, imperfectly organized, and ill-armed detachments results that made perfectly evident what could have been accomplished if we had prepared our army with the methods he himself has so clearly indicated.

After the action at Laon on May 19 the general and his division took up positions for an attack that Weygand wanted to launch in the

direction of Arras, between Amiens and Péronne, to cut in two the spearhead of the German armoured units and assure the junction of the Allied armies : that of the North, which had been swept out of Belgium, with that of the South. Unfortunately certain units that were to attack were unable to reach their positions in the required time (always the lack of speed !) and the whole operation had to be abandoned under enemy pressure.

At the end of May the German mechanized units reached the English Channel, with their left flank anchored on the Somme. They had even crossed the river at certain points, notably at Abbeville. The French Command wanted to hold on the Somme and decided to reduce the enemy bridgehead at Abbeville. Once more it was General de Gaulle who was put in charge of the operation. His Fourth Armoured Division had just been brought up to its full complement of men and materials. It comprised this time some twenty thousand men, six hundred tanks of fifteen to thirty tons, and motorized infantry. Its brilliant action, carried out on May 30 and 31, proved that we could perfectly well beat the Germans by the very methods that they used against us. General de Gaulle destroyed a large number of enemy tanks and seized four hundred prisoners and a huge amount of material, including tanks, motor trucks, and more than sixty anti-tank guns.

It should be added that on the evening of May 30 the advance of the Fourth Division caused the complete rout of a German regiment that poured back panic-stricken into Abbeville. Only the fall of night permitted the enemy to recover.

On June 2 General Weygand bestowed the following citation on General de Gaulle :

"This remarkable, bold, and resourceful leader attacked, on May 30 and 31, a very strongly held bridgehead to the south of Abbeville, broke through German resistance, advanced nearly ten miles inside the enemy lines, and captured many hundreds of prisoners and considerable material."

What these facts do not convey is the large part played in the outcome of such actions by the human element, the character of General de Gaulle himself. A young French lieutenant sent to him on liaison by an English corps during the battle of Abbeville told me that he had to ask a tank mechanic for the location of the general's headquarters. It was dawn of the thirtieth of May, and the battle had already started.

"The general ?" The mechanic laughed heartily. "In the first place he hasn't got any headquarters. *Il est dans la nature.* He's outdoors."

"Outdoors ?"

"Sure. Go to the end of the village and follow the hedge around to the right through the orchard. You'll find him on a small hill under an apple tree."

The officer had already set out when the mechanic called him back. "By the way," he said, always laughing, "if the general has moved,

look on the ground. You can follow him from one tree to another by his cigarette stubs."

In fact the officer discovered General de Gaulle under an apple tree, smoking relentlessly, and completely and utterly calm. He was dressed exactly like the mechanic, in an old leather jacket without any kind of insignia. At the moment the officer joined him things were going rather badly in the battle. The general gave a few instructions to a major who stood near him. This officer went off to deliver the orders, and the general said quietly : "It'll be better in a minute."

Some minutes later a courier who was passing by, seeing this leather-jacketed man under his apple tree and never dreaming that it could be a general, quietly asked him for directions. And De Gaulle, ple...ly, quietly, gave them to him. Then he went back to work on his maps.

Everything witnesses report about the general in action strengthens the impression of a man made for rough weather and hard times, a man whose faculties are sharpened in the face of critical situations.

#### CHAPTER VII

### FROM PARIS TO LONDON, VIA TOURS AND BORDEAUX

THE SUCCESS WON by General de Gaulle at Abbeville and Laon, despite the weakness of the men and material at his disposal, stemmed directly from his will to succeed as well as from his methods of attack by large combinations of tanks. Unfortunately he was practically the only man among the French to adopt this method. On all fronts we dissipated our forces, which were insufficient to begin with, by throwing them into battle day and night in small units every time one of the endless and pathetic calls for reinforcements came through from this or that part of our front. General de Gaulle is convinced that if he had had at his command all our tanks—we could still, at that time, have put in the field around twelve hundred—resistance would have been possible. Of course he would not have succeeded in breaking the German advance. But he could have slowed it down to such a point that a spirit of stubborn defence would have been able to arise in France, while reinforcements from England and supplies from America would have had time to reach French ports.

However that may be, the general's function as a combatant was soon to come to an end. His success in battle, added to his accurate technical predictions, make him a key figure to the French Premier at the moment when the latter was putting forth a last effort to strengthen and reinforce his administration. On June 6, about midnight, a representative from Paul Reynaud came to De Gaulle at his headquarters : the Premier wanted him to come to Paris.

De Gaulle set out immediately and reported to Paul Reynaud on

the same night. Reynaud asked him to work with his reshuffled Cabinet, reduced in number from eleven to eight members, which now consisted of : Reynaud, Pétain, Chautemps, Louis Marin, Ybarnegaray, Georges Mandel, Monnet, and Dautry.

On the morning of June 7 General de Gaulle was appointed Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of War under Reynaud's personal direction.

He was perfectly aware, when he took over his new office in the Rue St. Dominique, how completely the Government and the whole political countenance of France were shot through with defeatism. He knew, at least in part, the intrigues that were being woven about Paul Reynaud. He knew how the parties of the Left, having been under Russian-communist influence for too many years, had swung round from internationalism and pacifism to patriotism only when the Hitler menace became obvious. This had taken place around the years 1936-37, too late in fact for the bulk of the Left-minded French people to be able to acquire a real military fighting spirit. De Gaulle knew too how the parties of the Right, which had for years been carrying the banner of patriotism and the spirit of resistance to Germany, had suddenly swung round, after 1936, to a certain amount of sympathy for Fascist and Nazi ideas because they were scared by the alleged 'menace' of a communist move in France. The result was that the bulk of the Right-minded French people lost some of their traditional patriotic enthusiasm.

Thus Right and Left were morally unsettled and weakened even before the outbreak of the war in September, 1939. Of course the military reverses of May, and the first days of June, 1940, had brought this moral crisis to a climax. The old scum of pro-German propaganda which Joseph Caillaux and his friends Malvy, Bolo-Pasha, Almereyda, and others had already been representing from 1911 to 1918—and for which they have all been shot or temporarily imprisoned—reappeared triumphantly with the rumble of the approaching German tanks. This destructive propaganda can be summed up in a few words : The policy of resistance to German expansion in Europe was too hard for France to uphold. England and America were selfish allies or bad friends who had let France down after 1918. They had clipped the wings of French victory at Versailles, they had later given Germany the means of reconstructing her military machine, and now in this new war of 1939 England was once more asking too much of France in comparison with the small effort she was contributing herself. France could not afford to bleed endlessly for the Anglo-Saxons ; besides, what was this war about ? Hitler Germany did not want to impose harsh terms on France. Hitler had only two aims : one was to eliminate British influence from the Continent, the other was to destroy bolshevism and to colonize Russia. This just plan of the Führer left a very decent place for France in a New Order. France ought simply to recognize the supremacy of Germany in Europe and out of Europe. She ought to accept a secondary place and sell her

birthright of greatness, which she was no longer capable of upholding, for the simple right to exist. Hitler would generously grant her that right within precise limits and with a decent amount of prosperity. . . .

This kind of propaganda already existed during the war of 1914–18, but it was mainly supported then, in France, by some pacifist politicians of the Left, that is, by members of the Socialist and Radical-Socialist parties—among them Pierre Laval already—and later by the communists and by scattered business men and a few men in society who had some personal interest in a German victory. However dangerous, this conspiracy left the national spirit of the French people almost untouched. Statesmen like Poincaré, Clemenceau, and Maurice Barrès, who resisted defeatism and eventually broke its force in 1917–18, did not lose one of their followers in this fight because the mettle of French national feeling was still practically unimpaired.

Unfortunately in 1939–40 France remained weakened by her gigantic losses in the first World War and she had since then been exposed to endless waves of foreign propaganda. Discouragement and pro-German feeling had found many new followers even among the people of the Right. The official patriots themselves were divided. So-called young nationalists like Henriot, Xavier Vallat, and Tixier Vignancourt were not far from agreeing about Germany with the old Radical-Socialist leader of the pro-German Left, Joseph Caillaux, and his younger friend Montigny. Opportunist politicians, like Anatole de Monzie, Pierre Laval, Marcel Déat, Marquet, the mayor of Bordeaux, and others had shifted from the old Leftist, pro-Russian attitude to one decidedly pro-German. Moreover, the number and influence of the defeatist or pro-German business men had increased since 1932 because of the revival of German strength shrewdly underlined by Hitler's anti-Soviet propaganda. Newspapers of the conservative parties like *Le Matin*, *Le Journal*, *L'Action Française*, and *Gringoire* were now more or less openly running campaigns of appeasement on the same pattern as defeatist newspapers of the Left had done in 1917. They all more or less frankly and more or less cleverly advocated peace at almost any cost, by their willingness to come to terms with Germany.

Even the associations of war veterans had been caught in the wave and influenced by the demoralizing propaganda. Their leaders had accepted invitations to Germany in the two or three years preceding the war and had returned with impressive reports of their reception by the Führer and his wishes for a Franco-German 'entente' based on the ruins of the Treaty of Versailles.

Of course such a surrender by France of her war aims of 1918, and of her very spirit, to Nazi Germany implied a break with England and a complete alteration of her financial, industrial, and colonial set-up in order to harness French economy to that of Germany. What's more, not everybody would lose by such a change and that is the reason for the extraordinary enthusiasm with which the defeatists carried on their intrigues. They were motivated, too, by the hunger for patronage

that always goes along with a change in administration, and further by fear, the fear of a ruthless Germany.

These sophisticates or pseudo-sophisticates of defeatism reasoned something like this : 'If Germany wins we'll be on her side, and if in spite of everything England gains the victory we'll always be able to make a deal with her by appealing to her spirit of liberalism.' Consequently they thought they were playing with loaded dice.

They thought even more so, of course, since the tenth of May, 1940, when German military superiority began affirming itself more and more every day. The idea that Germany was invincible gained ground every minute among formerly unprejudiced people. The reports from the French General Headquarters itself were very pessimistic. And it was no mystery to General de Gaulle that personalities as different and as closely connected with Paul Reynaud as Marshal Pétain, Vice-President of the Council, Paul Baudouin, head of the Banque de l'Indo-Chine, recently appointed Secretary of State, and the Countess de Portes, intimate friend of the Premier, were in favour of stopping the fight.

De Gaulle realized all that ; but at the same time he knew that the head of the Government had given him his appointment because he personally still had some courage left and expected action. So he set only one condition on his co-operation : that the refurbished Government should express its determination to fight on at all costs.

Reynaud agreed and even promised General de Gaulle that he would send him to London to make contact with Winston Churchill, the living symbol of the spirit of all-out war.

Before his departure for England the new Under-Secretary of State insisted on getting from the French Military High Command a commission as official as that obtained from the Premier. This general, whose oak-leaf insignia was only twenty-three days old, this member of the Government whose political prerogatives had little more than thirty-six hours' existence, dared to stand up to the great military men and try to get from them a clearly defined plan for continued French resistance.

It must be admitted that such a definition of our intentions was long overdue on June 5. The Germans had launched their offensive against our hurriedly reconstituted lines on the Somme. General Weygand, hastily recalled from Syria and Commander-in-Chief since May 19, in the place of Gamelin, had himself called this stand the 'Battle of France,' the prize of which was Paris. What would happen if we had to retreat still further ?

De Gaulle had in mind total defence everywhere : on the Marne, around Paris, on the Seine, on the rivers south of Paris. But he failed in his attempt to get specific commitments on these lines from the High Command.

He left for London on June 8, accompanied by Major General Spears, British liaison officer at the French General Headquarters, and by a tall, smart, calm officer, Lieutenant Jeoffroy de Courcel, of Weygand's General Staff in Syria, who had just been assigned to him

by the Ministry of War as aide-de-camp. Henceforth this young officer was never to leave General de Gaulle.

The general saw Mr. Churchill the afternoon of his arrival in London. He spent the night at the French Embassy and returned to Paris on June 9. He found the situation much worse than when he left. At the front, the Somme line had been broken, the Germans were threatening Rouen and le Havre after crossing the Bresle River. In the centre, they were advancing across the Chemin des Dames, famous in the last war for stubborn French defence. General Weygand was predicting an extension of the German attack in the east toward Lorraine, Alsace, the Swiss border. They were sending an inexhaustible number of fresh divisions into the lines whereas we could expect no more reinforcements. Norway had laid down its arms. Finally the French Government was getting ready to evacuate all its departments from Paris.

All the same, General de Gaulle brought warm words of encouragement as well as formal promises from Winston Churchill. On June 10 a telegram from the British Prime Minister confirmed the verbal assurances given to General de Gaulle and repeated that England was prepared to give France 'the maximum possible support.' Churchill added : "All available means are being used to give help on land, sea, and in the air." He recalled that "the Royal Air Force has been constantly engaged over the battle area, and that during the last few days fresh British troops have landed in France to join those already engaged in the common fight, while further extensive reinforcements are being rapidly organized and will shortly be available."

On the same day Italy entered the war, and Paul Reynaud issued a communiqué announcing that the Government was leaving Paris. It was going to reach Tours on June 11.

Reynaud himself arrived in Tours on June 11 after a visit to General Headquarters, which had just moved from the region of Meaux, east of Paris, to the small city of Briare on the Loire.

De Gaulle made the trip from Paris to Tours in a car following that of Reynaud. He saw the car of the chief of the Government delayed for hours on the road, by columns of refugees and vehicles of all sorts slowly flowing toward the south. In the prefecture of Orleans, he saw the head of the Government trying vainly to get the head of the army, General Weygand, on the phone. Reynaud was shouting : "This is the Premier speaking ; give me the General-in-Chief !" But he could not be connected—or was General Weygand impossible to locate, somewhere along the lines ?—or did he think it useless once more with Reynaud ?

The great question at the moment for the French, of course, was : what to do next ? For General Headquarters and General Weygand it seems the only line of retreat they contemplated was the line from Tours to Bordeaux—the same that had been followed by the Government in the defeat of 1871 and again in the first days of 1914 until the victory of the Marne change the whole situation.

General de Gaulle used all his efforts to prevent this retreat to the south, which could only accentuate the split between France and England, the admitted objective of Hitler's policy.

De Gaulle accepted the withdrawal of the Government to Tours, only as a step toward the peninsula of Brittany—not toward Bordeaux. He accepted it because it was easier and probably safer, in the circumstances, than the direct road from Paris to Brittany through Normandy, which was clogged with elements of the retreating French army and menaced by pursuing German armoured cars and planes. But whatever the road, the general did not want to hear of any other line of retreat than that to Brittany—and his idea was to go there to make a stand, not to surrender.

On June 11, he spent many hours in a first-floor office of the prefecture of Tours, trying to convince Paul Reynaud that the proper road to take was not the way to Tours and Bordeaux, but the way to Brittany. The terrain of Brittany, he pointed out, being narrow and hilly, would lend itself to anti-tank defence, and the proximity of England would give us the best chance of receiving supplies and getting support from the Royal Air Force and the Anglo-French fleet. It would then be possible to gather the remnants of the retreating armies into two huge groups : one in Brittany, the other on the slopes of the Vosges, backed by the Maginot Line. If these two groups were formed quickly the Germans would think twice before rushing into the gap left open like a trap toward the south. The fight would go on.

Reynaud at one moment seemed to be convinced and authorized General de Gaulle to telephone to General Headquarters that the Government would leave the next day, June 12, for the town of Quimper in Brittany.

That afternoon the two men continued to work together, and Reynaud got numerous phone calls from various people. Most of them protested against the departure for Quimper, news of which had spread with surprising rapidity.

Reynaud stood fast, asking General de Gaulle from time to time for confirmation on a technical point or for military arguments in favour of resistance in the Breton peninsula. Finally, about five o'clock, Madame de Portes came in. General de Gaulle got up and went over to lean out of a window overlooking the courtyard of the prefecture.

Hélène de Portes was a sturdy, auburn-haired, bourgeois-looking woman of forty-two who looked fifty, with bright piercing eyes in a rather commonplace freckled face. Dressed in a clumsy *tailleur* and a rather provincial velvet hat, she was remarkable only by the decided, almost harsh tone of her voice and the strength of her nervous square hands. She hardly greeted the general although she knew him very well. De Gaulle himself said afterwards : "In any other circumstance, by sheer discretion, I should have left the room ; but at that moment I felt something decisive might be going to happen and my duty as a soldier was to stay there."

Hélène de Portes led Reynaud a little away from the window, near

his desk. He looked as he usually did in those days when Madame de Portes insisted on seeing him : bored to death and yet unable to dismiss her or even to resist. He listened to her feverish whispering almost without a word of answer. At the end of an hour both of them got up to leave the room. Reynaud had not said anything to the general. When they were on the threshold Madame de Portes asked Reynaud in an undertone :

"Aren't you going to tell the general?"

"Of course," Reynaud answered quickly, as if he were coming out of a dream. And turning to De Gaulle, "I must inform you that the Government will definitely move to Bordeaux."

The general bowed without a word. A moment later, when he called General Headquarters to countermand his previous orders, he was told that the countermand *had already been issued*.

General Headquarters, as we have seen, had been moved to Briare, on the Loire. The author was himself in Tours, sent by headquarters as liaison officer with the Government (Ministry of Information).

That same day, June 11, Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Halifax, then Foreign Secretary, arrived from London by plane and tried to persuade the French Government to hold out.

It was a strange arrival in a strange setting. This peaceful town in a province in western France, where nothing ever happened, asleep for so many years, had an air of pathetic disorder. The streets were black with a crowd of refugees from Paris and the provinces, perfectly aimless people who had nothing to do there. They swamped the avenues, the hotels, the cafés, the public buildings, the post offices, and the press bureaux. The whole place was at the mercy of enemy aeroplanes, which could have made a cemetery out of the village but abstained—it was all too obvious—because the unceasing confusion in France suited them better than a movement of despair, which was always imminent.

The Government at Tours was invisible and almost inaccessible. The ministries and services were dispersed among various neighbouring châteaux, lost in the country and not always provided with telephones.

In this atmosphere of disaster and under the pressure of his immediate entourage and of his Cabinet Ministers Reynaud seemed determined to ask the English to release France from her obligations so that she might negotiate a separate peace. General de Gaulle, along with such ministers as Mandel, Marin, and Dautry, was among the few men who did their utmost to convince Reynaud of the terrific consequences of such a policy. But the Premier, influenced by the dire reports of his military chiefs, seemed incapable of swimming against the current of his own administration. On the twelfth General Weygand argued before the Cabinet, assembled at the dismal old Château de Cangé, the necessity for issuing a request for an armistice. Weygand insisted on the armistice from the military standpoint as

well as from the social point of view. The army, he said, was disorganized, with no means of redress ; riots had broken out in Paris, where the communists were at the point of seizing power.

At this last piece of news Mandel, Minister of the Interior, contradicted Weygand. He telephoned the prefect of the Paris police, Langeron, who told him that everything was calm. The unhappy populace waited only for instructions, for support from their responsible leaders. After this debate the ministers decided . . . they would come to no further decision on the subject of the armistice. They demanded that Mr. Churchill come back to Tours to learn of the last disclosures of Weygand and to discuss under what conditions France could be relieved by England of her promise not to make a separate peace. This obligation had been contracted by France on March 28, 1940, at London, at Reynaud's request, during the sixth meeting of the Supreme War Council.

Mr. Churchill, who had returned to London on the evening of June 11, came back to Tours on the thirteenth with Lord Halifax and Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production. The Germans completed the encirclement of Paris, which had just been declared an open city. They began to cross the Seine and the Marne in a mass of more than a hundred divisions (some 1,800,000 men).

The Council of French Ministers met at three o'clock on June 13 to discuss for the last time the expediency of a request for an armistice. They asked Mr. Churchill to take part in the debate. But Mr. Churchill declined this compromising offer. He limited himself to long conversations with Paul Reynaud and with Mandel, who had taken part in other dramatic Anglo-French conferences in 1918, when he had been George Clemenceau's assistant. Mandel remained faithful to the spirit of the '*Père la Victoire*' [Father Victory] and an advocate of resistance. About four o'clock the English ministers left for England. Reynaud and Mandel charged themselves with reporting their conversations to the Council.

At this moment, in the court of the prefecture, under a gay and sunny sky a group of journalists, officers, and notables, assembled by chance, awaited the results of the Anglo-French conference. They saw the doors open, watched Churchill and Halifax step into the old Rolls of Ambassador Campbell, driven by a chauffeur with the impeccable appearance of a naval officer. Reynaud, who escorted them to the car, had the bearing of an automaton—he was Mickey Mouse petrified. Churchill had tears in his eyes. When they saw the tears, the French spectators knew what had happened. They turned pale and themselves became misty-eyed. Edouard Herriot came out of the council chamber in tears and said in pressing my hand : "At this moment they are before Paris."

I could find nothing to answer to this slightly theatrical performance. The only thing I would have liked to say was that he would have done better not to evacuate the Ruhr in 1924 than to weep in 1940. But what good would it do to rake over the past with a statesman

whose patriotism and intentions were unquestionable ? The one thing that mattered now was to unite ourselves against the enemy.

Demonstrations of fury alternated between tears and despair. All of a sudden, while we were awaiting the end of the conference, Hélène de Portes tried to enter the antechamber to give a message to Reynaud. But an officer pushed her aside with a phrase which everyone took up and quoted :

"No, madame. If France must die, she will die decently."

This did not mean necessarily that the officer was in favour of resistance. But certainly he was against Madame de Portes ! I encountered again at Bordeaux, a couple of days afterwards, the same reaction against Hélène de Portes from the military men surrounding Pétain. The French military, whether or not they accepted defeat, wanted outward appearances to be observed. In a disaster caused by our profound weaknesses they concentrated upon our superficial defects. But their mutual understanding stopped there.

That same evening, at Tours, General Weygand ran into a young officer, a friend of mine and one of his pupils at the École de Guerre, Commandant P. The two men had a memorable conversation.

P. : "So, General, it is surrender ?"

W. : "I don't like the word, P. When one has lost everything one doesn't capitulate ; one is beaten, a condition, that is all."

P. : "But, General, we still have our fleet, our air force, our empire, immense resources ; and England is still fighting."

W. : "Do you know that England will be forced to sue for peace before eight days are up ?"

P. : "If that is the case, General, haven't we contributed to the defeat of England in allying ourselves with her ? And doomed on the side of the doomed, wouldn't it be more honourable to go down with her in a few days than betray her to-day ?"

W. : "You have changed, Commandant P. I don't know you any more. You have been corrupted, my friend."

And Weygand walked away.

This was the atmosphere in Tours between June 11 and June 13, 1940.

The same day Reynaud had one of his assistants, Roland de Margerie, aided by a friend possessing an intimate knowledge of the United States, draw up a last appeal to President Roosevelt. This appeal was entirely based on the idea that Paris would be defended to the last and that the United States could not abandon a France that was fighting as it had at Verdun. But Reynaud suppressed the declaration that Paris would be defended and sent out the appeal which was thus deprived of all its force. From this time on one had the disheartening impression that this head of the Government, who was the only possible leader of the resistance, was making fighting gestures which he himself did not believe in any more.

Reynaud's report to the Cabinet on his conversation with Churchill was published June 24 by the French High Commissioner for Propaganda at Bordeaux. It read as follows :

The British Premier, in accord with Lord Halifax and Lord Beaverbrook, who accompanied him to France, declared that the British Government would continue to give France, as in the past, the maximum military, air, and naval support in its power, but that if events forced France to demand an armistice from Germany the opinion of Churchill, Halifax, and Beaverbrook was that England in no event would heap blame on her ally in trouble and would understand the situation in which France found herself much against her will.

This version adds that M. Reynaud's statement was made in the presence of M. Baudouin, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, subsequently Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Pétain Cabinet. It continues :

The decision to ask for an armistice was again put off twenty-four hours for two reasons : first, to await President Roosevelt's reply to France's supreme appeal and, second, to give the London Cabinet more precise information regarding the situation and the apparent consequences. [And the accusation is added that in the meantime] certain French Ministers, notably Georges Mandel, acting without Government instructions, intervened with the British Government so that the Churchill, Beaverbrook, and Halifax declarations could not be maintained and so that Britain could take toward France a much less comprehensive and a more imperative attitude.

The British version, presented by Mr. Churchill in Parliament, June 25, is that the invitation to come to Tours had been made directly to him by M. Reynaud "when it became clear that the defeat and subjugation of France was imminent, and that the fine army on which so many hopes were set was reeling under the German flail." At this meeting, according to Mr. Churchill, M. Reynaud, "after dwelling on the conditions at the front and the state of the French army," asked him

whether Great Britain would release France from her obligation not to negotiate for an armistice or peace without the consent of her British ally. Although I knew how great the French sufferings were, and that we had not so far endured equal trials or made an equal contribution in the field, I felt bound to say that I could not give consent. . . . We agreed that a further appeal should be made by M. Reynaud to the United States, and that if the reply was not sufficient to enable M. Reynaud to go on fighting —and he, after all, was the fighting spirit—then we should meet again and take a decision in the light of the new factors.

In a broadcast at eleven-thirty in the evening Reynaud announces the 'new and final appeal' he has sent to President Roosevelt. He calls for 'clouds of war planes' to come from America 'to crush the evil force that dominates Europe.' He recalls that each time he has

asked Mr. Roosevelt to increase his assistance to France the President has complied with the same generosity as American opinion itself. He says that France has suffered for the common cause of freedom and that the time has come for the democracies to pay their moral and material debt to her. He asks if 'the American people will hesitate to declare themselves against Nazi Germany.' He warns : 'Our fight, each day more painful, has no further meaning if in continuing we do not see, even far away, the hope of a common victory growing.' And he concludes :

"No matter what happens in coming days, the French are going to suffer. May they be worthy of the past of the nation. May they become brothers. May they unite about their wounded fatherland. The day of resurrection will come."

This speech sounded terribly like a speech of mourning and of farewell. It was certainly not a Clemenceau speech.

Later in the afternoon the English Government sent to the French Government a message affirming once more its determination to fight on for a common victory.

We cannot measure the various forms of tribulations which will fall upon our people in the near future [this message said]. We are sure that the ordeal by fire will only fuse them together into one unconquerable whole. We renew to the French republic our pledge and our resolve to continue the struggle at all costs in France, in this island, upon the oceans, and in the air, *wherever it may lead us*, using all our resources to the utmost limits and sharing together the burden of repairing the damages of war. *We shall never turn from the conflict until France stands safe and erect in all her grandeur*, until the wronged and enslaved states and peoples have been liberated, and until civilization is free from the nightmare of Nazidom. That this day will dawn we are more sure than ever. It may dawn sooner than we may now have a right to expect.

The text of this message, in which one can recognize the magnificent style of Mr. Churchill, instilled with enthusiasm all Frenchmen who longed to keep up the resistance. Needless to say, first among them was General de Gaulle. He refused to be downhearted. "The defeatists," he said, "are in the saddle to-day. But we are drawing near the time when public opinion will cry for resistance. When we reach that point I will be in a position to do all I want."

On the fourteenth, the Germans entered Paris and at the same time widened their attack in the east, between the Seine and the Meuse, with the objective of flanking the rear of the Maginot Line. The French Government left for Bordeaux.

At Bordeaux, on the fifteenth, the dissension within the Cabinet about asking for an armistice became sharper still. Obstinate supporting the partisans of continued resistance, General de Gaulle put forward the moral and practical impossibility of the French

Government carrying out its duties so long as it remained under the direct threat from the enemy. Although the Government had not seen fit to fall back and fight in Brittany there was still a way out : northern Africa. The general pleaded passionately for the transfer to Morocco and Algeria of as large a part as possible of our military forces and light industrial equipment, together of course with the Government itself. In this way France would remain active in the struggle. Her fleet would continue the fight in collaboration with the British navy. Italy would be checked in the Mediterranean, and Hitler, imprisoned in Europe, would ultimately be defeated.

"Even if we were temporarily reduced to possessing only half of Morocco," De Gaulle kept saying, "we should carry on in spite of everything until the time, which is sure to come, when mechanical superiority acquired with American aid will give us victory."

At that very moment Paul Reynaud asked General de Gaulle to return to London to see once again Mr. Churchill.

The general was commissioned to take up various measures with the English Government: The transportation of the French Government troops, materials, workers, and machine tools to North Africa would require a great many vessels. Part of his mission was to get definite ideas as to the tonnage that England could make available to France. There was also the question of transferring from France to England several hundred German aviators who had been made prisoners, so as to prevent these pilots, who might be freed by a German victory in France, from renewing their fight against England.

The general reached London during the night of Saturday, June 15. On the morning of Sunday, the sixteenth, he saw the French ambassador, M. Corbin, Mr. Anthony Eden, and Sir Robert Vansittart. He learned that the English Government was preparing to make France a most important offer, one that involved a close tightening of co-operation between the two countries, one that might greatly strengthen public opinion in France. General de Gaulle immediately communicated this fact to Paul Reynaud in Bordeaux by telephone. He sensed that Reynaud was more nervous than ever, tired, hard pressed, badgered by those around him.

"It is absolutely necessary," Reynaud told the general, "that this offer be made quickly and that it be far-reaching in its consequences, if the schemes for negotiating with the German Government are to be stopped."

A few moments after this long-distance conversation General de Gaulle learned that what the English had in mind was no less than a proposal for 'an indissoluble union' between the two countries. French and English citizens would have equal rights, they would form a customs union, and the expenses of the war would be borne in common.

That same Sunday General de Gaulle had lunch with Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. This was indeed an important luncheon and an important conversation. A meeting of the British Cabinet was to take place that afternoon. At this meeting the proposed text of a

declaration to France along the above lines would be discussed and probably ratified.

About four-thirty General de Gaulle phoned Paul Reynaud again to give him the terms of the proposal and tell him that he would himself bring the full text by plane on the very same evening.

"Fine," Reynaud said, "but the French Cabinet is meeting at five o'clock. Time is very short. Above all, can you assure me that the declaration will in fact come from Mr. Churchill himself, and will be signed by him?"

At that moment Mr. Churchill, who was at the general's side, took the telephone and himself confirmed to Reynaud that it would be a formal offer involving the entire English Government. The British Prime Minister went even further : he proposed to the French Premier that they meet without delay at some place in France, possibly in Brittany. Paul Reynaud and he, Winston Churchill, would be accompanied by high-ranking military and naval experts. Paul Reynaud seemed to accept the invitation and the English began preparing a boat to transport their own delegation during the night.

About five o'clock the British proposal was presented to Reynaud by the British ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell. It was in the form of a draft for an act of union between Great Britain and France. A common constitution would provide for a joint conduct of military, financial, and economic policies. A single Cabinet would direct all the forces of both nations. The union would appeal for all-out aid from America. Paul Reynaud might be the first head of the unified War Cabinet, the first Premier of Britain and France !

On that very Sunday, late in the afternoon, when General de Gaulle was about to fly from London to Bordeaux, he learned by telephone that the French Cabinet had once more been unable to agree on the question of asking for an armistice, and had adjourned the scheduled five-o'clock meeting. The general took off. It was a wonderful Sunday afternoon, quiet and sunny, that sixteenth of June—and a decisive day for France.

The situation in Bordeaux was then roughly as follows : The French Cabinet was in almost continuous session at the Prefecture. It was at the Préfecture that Reynaud remained in communication with the English Government, sometimes through the British ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell, sometimes through General de Gaulle.

The Cabinet was discussing the answer of President Roosevelt to Reynaud's appeal. This answer was considered as representing about all America could promise—but the President made reference to the power of the American Congress to prevent any military commitment. This recalled to many French ministers the famous disappointment over the American Senate's rejection of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. This argument was used very strongly by the partisans of surrender. They affirmed, too, that England herself was unable to carry on the fight and would very soon capitulate.

The Cabinet further discussed the British offer of union. The very same defeatists who wanted to surrender to Germany pleaded against the union, insisting that France could not become 'an English dominion.' At any rate it seems that no formal vote was taken. But at 10 p.m. a vote was taken on the proposal to ask Germany for an armistice. The Cabinet voted thirteen to ten in favour of an armistice. Paul Reynaud immediately resigned. President Lebrun asked Marshal Pétain to form a government.

By ten-thirty Reynaud left the meeting. I spent an hour with him that same evening with a few friends in a room of the building of the 'Commandement Militaire' of Bordeaux where the Presidency of the Council was installed. He was very calm but, rather oddly, didn't seem to measure all the seriousness of the situation. With the German armies crossing the Loire he still talked of his possible comeback to power—and to a policy of resistance—within the next few days ! I must add to his credit that he assumed that the Pétain Government would not accept Hitler's terms for an armistice.

When General de Gaulle landed in Bordeaux that night, about eleven, he heard the French radio announce Reynaud's resignation and that Marshal Pétain was at the head of the new government. M. Chautemps was Vice-Premier, General Weygand Minister of Defence, Admiral Darlan Minister of Navy and Merchant Marine, General Pujo Minister of Air. De Gaulle knew this was the end.

Bordeaux, city of the defeats of France ! What a sinister look it had, this southern port made for peace and prosperity, now crowded with cars, trucks, a horde of haggard refugees from northern France, Belgium, and Holland, soldiers of all ranks, French, Polish, and English, women slovenly or sometimes too well groomed—a milling herd through which famous politicians and wealthy business men were slipping furtively, already as ludicrous as actors after the curtain has fallen. The general made his way rapidly through this confused mass of people. He went to the Prefecture, to the town hall, where the Ministries were installed. He was looking for a place where it might still be possible to act, to plead once more the continuation of the fight, and to issue perhaps some order of resistance and salvation. But Reynaud and his crew were out of the game. It was not they who would answer the English Government's proposal for welding together the two largest empires in the world, nor the words of the American President.

Marshal Pétain that same night told Señor Leguerica, the Spanish ambassador, to ask that Madrid communicate to Hitler the French request for an armistice.

The next day, Monday the seventeenth, at 12.30 p.m., Marshal Pétain read over the radio his famous declaration :

I have asked *l'adversaire* (the opponent) to put an end to hostilities. The Government yesterday appointed plenipoten-

tiaries to receive (his) conditions. I took this decision with the stout heart of a soldier because the military situation imposed it. We had hoped to resist on the Somme-Aisne line. General Weygand had regrouped our forces, and his name alone presaged victory. The line yielded, however, under the pressure of the enemy and forced our troops to retreat. From June 13 the request for an armistice was inevitable. The blow surprises you, and remembering 1914-18 you seek the reasons for it. I am going to give them.

On May 1, 1917, we still had 3,280,000 men under arms in spite of three years of murderous fighting ; on the eve of the present battle we had 500,000 fewer. In May, 1918, we had 85 British divisions ; in May, 1940, we only had 10. In 1918 we had with us 58 Italian divisions and 42 American divisions. The inferiority of our material was even greater than that of our effective forces. French aviation has fought at odds of one to six. Not so strong as [we were] twenty-two years ago, we also had fewer friends, too few children, too few arms, too few allies. There is the cause of our defeat.

The French people do not deny the blow. All peoples have known ups and downs. It is by the way they act that they show themselves to be weak or great. We shall learn a lesson from the battle which has been lost. Since the victory [of 1918] the spirit of pleasure has prevailed over the spirit of sacrifice. People have demanded more than they have given. They have wanted to spare themselves effort.

To-day misfortunes come. I was with you in the glorious days. As head of the Government I shall remain with you in the dark days. Stand by me. The fight still goes on. It is for France, the soil of her sons.

Later in the day Baudouin, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a declaration over the radio that differed in some respects from that of Marshal Pétain. He emphasized that "France would not accept a peace without honour." Her troops would continue to fight until the terms of the armistice were known. France would continue the struggle if the conditions named brought shame on the country.

All this was very clear, but it was not a reply to the British proposal. Or rather it was a legal quibble, a 'no' lacking in the most elementary courtesy.

The English Government, although naturally it was amazed at the French Government's silence on the proposal for a union of the two countries, had no thought but to continue the war. The declaration of Marshal Pétain seemed to shut the door on all possibility of Anglo-French collaboration. But the British still tried to see some ground for hope in the speech of Baudouin.

The undaunted Mr. Churchill drew up a new message on the eighteenth. Lord Lloyd, Minister of Colonies, was entrusted with

this final appeal to Marshal Pétain, to President Lebrun, and to Baudouin.

General de Gaulle had returned to London early that same day, June 18, with General Spears in a British plane. He was profoundly impressed by the defeatist and anti-British attitude of the men who were joining Marshal Pétain in his government. He had found the same ideas, too, among several colleagues of Reynaud, excepting Mandel, Dautry, Marin, and Reynaud himself. He knew that the men who now held France's fate in their hands were resigned to accept whatever the Germans would require. They were decided to an unconditional surrender more or less wrapped up in patriotic words. Consequently he thought nothing would be gained by his going to Bordeaux once again. All resistance was over in France for the time being. The war shifted to England and to England alone. But since Lord Lloyd was returning to Bordeaux the general begged the French Colonel Bonavita, of the Inter-Allied Committee for Military Studies in London, to accompany Lord Lloyd. The colonel was to give the French Command all necessary details about the ships that the English Government was still holding at its disposal for transportation to North Africa.

Lord Lloyd reached Bordeaux on June 19, saw in the course of the day President Lebrun, Marshal Pétain, and Herriot and Jeanneney, Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate. At first it looked as though the Cabinet had definitely made up its mind to leave for North Africa. But the generals who received Colonel Bonavita appeared dubious about the finality of the plans and did not seem very much impressed by the proposal to transport troops to Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. At all events the departure of the Government was adjourned and a new Cabinet meeting was announced for the morning of the twentieth.

Lord Lloyd spent the night at Bordeaux to be on hand to urge upon the Government once more, the next morning, the necessity of leaving France.

He saw Baudouin for the last time on June 20. Baudouin confirmed that the Government would go to Perpignan and stated that if after reaching Perpignan it learned that the Germans had occupied Bordeaux it would remove immediately to North Africa.

As a matter of fact the Government was never to leave Bordeaux except to go to Clermont-Ferrand and to Vichy (July 2). And the departure of Marshal Pétain and his ministers was to take place under the vigilance of German troops.

This dry recital of events is painful enough, but the detailed incidents that each individual could experience are even more so.

At Bordeaux my last meetings with responsible government men were heartbreaking. On June 17 Pomaret, Minister of the Interior, in his large office in the Prefecture, was occupied solely in preventing French civilians and soldiers from crossing the frontiers to rejoin their English allies and continue the war. Pierre Laval, who had already begun his manœuvres to entrench himself in the next administration,

explained to me on the morning of June 21, in the lobby of the Hotel Splendid, how he was going to assure collaboration between France and Germany. This entente, he said, could have been made long before 1939 and without combat ! "All France had to do was to break with Poland and with England and to give Hitler a free hand in the East. Hitler had nothing against us, he wanted nothing from France." [Of course he wanted nothing—but to destroy her for ever.]

I saw the newspapers being made up in this atmosphere of armistices. The editors who yesterday printed news of aerial action by the R.A.F. and of engagements by the English fleet, to-day threw these dispatches in the waste basket. And when I remarked on this to one of them he answered : "If that is still your opinion, you would be better off in London."

The evening of June 21 for the last time I walked up and down on the Place des Quinconces with Paul Reynaud. We spoke once more of the supreme possibilities of resistance in Africa, the means of gaining time, of indirectly aiding England, of waiting for America. When we separated Hélène de Portes, coming out of her hotel, said to me with a brittle half-smile :

"You haven't told him too many pieces of folly, I hope."

The 'pieces of folly' were my suggestions for resistance.

A head of the Cabinet in Pétain's Ministry of Government Pensions repeated : "Those who go to London are traitors." He was in perfect agreement with Colonel V., former head of the military cabinet of Paul Reynaud. Warned by another officer that German planes had dropped mines in the Gironde and that the departure from Bordeaux of the destroyer carrying the English ambassador and his party would thus become dangerous if the passage weren't dragged, this colonel replied simply : "Very well. Let them blow up."

M. F., one of our former ambassadors in Berlin, to whom I announced my intention of going to England since she was continuing the war, answered with visible irritation in the presence of my friend, Edgar Mowrer : "Those who leave to-day will never return."

I gathered all these remarks by outstanding people at random during rapid conversations, in the confusion of those last disastrous hours, in restaurants, in the street. They trickled through the anonymous mass of the population, which did not accept defeat and which did not hide its desire to see the English continue the war and "avenge France," as certain of them said. From morning to night in front of the English Consulate stood a crowd of men who demanded the means of going to England to fight, to work, to help beat the Nazis in any way at all. A workman said to me : "Take me. I would rather be killed there with the English than work here for the Boches."

Such was the feeling of all these good people. Even before the appeals of General de Gaulle reached them they themselves had invented Free France. They associated with the idea of England the names of certain politicians whom they believed capable of resistance : Mandel, Reynaud, Marin, Herriot. Others murmured with clenched

fists : "Ah, if we only had Foch." Everyone knew that there were supporters of the resistance policy among the civil leaders as among the military chiefs ; they knew that the request for an armistice had not drawn a unanimous vote, in fact far from it, in the Reynaud Cabinet. But they had but little knowledge of the names of men who could lead them. The Press, asleep underground in anticipation of Hitler, never said a word, and the people struggled in a kind of night where instinct alone guided them.

On the other hand those among the small clan of notables who were opportunists knew very well where they were going ; they were getting on the bandwagon, they were adapting themselves to the German victory they regarded as definite : "they were rushing into servitude," as General de Gaulle said a few days later. And anything or anybody that placed an obstacle in the way of this shameful rush they set aside with fury.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS

NO ONE IN France, or almost no one, had the faintest idea of the clauses in the armistice which the French plenipotentiaries sent by the Bordeaux Government were about to sign in the famous railroad car of Rethondes, near Compiègne, in the same place where Foch in 1918 dictated the conditions of the victors. These plenipotentiaries—an ambassador, an admiral, three generals—started out on the seventeenth of June. It is certain that the Pétain Government had learned from them before June 20 the general purport of the German terms. On the twenty-second, without being consulted or even warned, the French people, still rich in courage and hope, full of resources despite their defeats, and sustained by a great ally, were pledged by their Government to accept the following conditions :

#### FRANCO-GERMAN ARMISTICE AGREEMENT June 22, 1940

The following armistice treaty has been agreed upon between :  
Colonel General Keitel, Chief of the German High Command,  
commissioned by the Führer of the German Reich and Supreme  
Commander of the German Armed Forces ;  
and

General Huntziger ; Léon Noel, French Ambassador ; Vice-  
Admiral Leluc ; Army Corps General Parisot ; Air Force General  
Bergeret ; authorized plenipotentiaries of the French Government.

#### I

The French Government orders a cessation of hostilities  
against the German Reich in French territory as well as in French  
possessions, colonies, protectorates, and territories under mandate

and on the seas. It orders French troops already encircled by German troops to lay down their arms immediately.

## II

For the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the German Reich, French territory located on the north and the west of the line indicated on the attached map will be occupied by German troops. In so far as the parts of the occupied territory may not yet be under control of German troops, their occupation will be carried out immediately following the conclusion of the present agreement.

## III

In the occupied portions of France the German Reich will exercise all the rights of a power in occupation. The French Government undertakes to facilitate by all means the regulations necessary for the exercise of these rights and their execution with the assistance of the French administration. The French Government will immediately request all French authorities and administrative services in the occupied territory to conform to the regulations of the German military authorities and to collaborate with the latter in proper fashion.

The German Government intends to reduce to a strict minimum the occupation of the West Coast, after the cessation of hostilities with England.

The French Government is free to choose its seat of government in unoccupied territory, or, if it so desires, to transfer it to Paris. In the latter case the German Government undertakes to extend to the French Government and its central administrative services all facilities necessary to enable it to administer both occupied and unoccupied territories from Paris.

## IV

French armed forces of land, sea, and air are to be demobilized and disarmed at the end of a period still to be determined. The troops necessary for the maintenance of internal order are exempt from this provision. Their numbers and the size of their armament will be determined by Germany and Italy respectively.

French armed forces stationed in the regions to be occupied by Germany shall be quickly withdrawn into unoccupied territory and demobilized. Before being withdrawn to unoccupied territory these troops shall lay down their arms and equipment in the places in which they are located at the time the present agreement goes into effect. They will be responsible for the orderly delivery of the aforementioned arms and equipment to the German troops.

## V

As a guarantee of the strict observation of the terms of this armistice it may be required that all artillery pieces, tanks, anti-

tank weapons, military aeroplanes, anti-aircraft guns, infantry arms, all means of conveyance and munitions of the units of the French army engaged against Germany and which are located, at the time the present agreement goes into effect, in the territory not to be occupied by Germany, be surrendered undamaged. The German Armistice Commission will determine the extent of such deliveries. The surrender of military aeroplanes may be dispensed with if all planes still in the possession of French armed forces are disarmed and stored under German control.

## VI

Arms, munitions, and war material of all kinds remaining in unoccupied French territory—in so far as the latter shall not have been left at the disposition of the French Government for the equipment of authorized French units—shall be deposited or placed in safe keeping under the control of Germany or Italy respectively. The German High Command reserves the right to order for this purpose all measures necessary to prevent unauthorized use of this material. The manufacture of new war material in unoccupied territory shall cease immediately.

## VII

All land and coastal fortifications, along with their arms, munitions and equipment, apparatus and machinery of all kinds located in the regions to be occupied, shall be handed over in good condition. In addition, plans of these fortifications, along with plans of those already taken by the German troops, shall be handed over. Detailed plans of mined positions, mine barrages, time bombs, chemical barrages, etc., are to be delivered to the German High Command. All such obstacles are to be removed by the French forces on demand of the German authorities.

## VIII

The French war fleet—with the exception of that portion of it left at the disposition of the French Government for the protection of French interests in the French colonial empire—shall be assembled in ports still to be determined and shall be demobilized and disarmed under the direction of Germany or, respectively, of Italy.

The ports of assembly shall be designated in accordance with the location of the home ports of ships during peace-time. The German Government declares solemnly to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes during the war the French war fleet stationed in ports under German control, with the exception of units necessary for guarding the coasts and for mine sweeping.

Moreover, it declares solemnly and formally that it does not intend to formulate claims with respect to the French war fleet

at the time of the conclusion of peace. With the exception of that part of the French war fleet, still to be determined, which shall be assigned to safeguard French interests in the colonial empire, all warships now located outside French territorial waters shall be recalled to France.

#### IX

The French High Command shall furnish to the German High Command exact information as to all mines laid by France as well as to all harbour and coastal mine fields and military defence facilities. Sweeping of mine fields shall be carried out by the French forces in so far as the German High Command so requires.

#### X

The French Government obligates itself to undertake in the future no hostile action against the German Reich either with any part of the armed forces remaining under its orders or in any other manner. The French Government will likewise prevent members of the French armed forces from leaving French territory and will take precautions to prevent the transfer to England or any other foreign country of arms or equipment of any sort, including ships, aeroplanes, etc.

The French Government will forbid French subjects to fight against Germany in the service of States with which Germany is still at war. French subjects who do not conform to this regulation will be treated by the German troops as guerrillas.

#### XI

Until further notice French merchant ships of whatever kind, including harbour and coastal vessels now in French hands, are forbidden to leave port. Resumption of commercial shipping shall be subject to authorization in advance by the German Government or the Italian Government respectively.

French merchant vessels now located outside French ports shall be recalled to France by the French Government. In case their recall is not possible, they shall be directed to neutral ports.

All confiscated German vessels at present in French ports shall be surrendered undamaged on demand.

#### XII

All aeroplanes now in French territory shall immediately be forbidden to make flights. Any plane making a flight without previously obtaining German permission will be considered an enemy plane by the German Air Force and will be treated as such.

Flying fields and ground facilities of the air force in unoccupied territory shall be placed under the control of Germany or of Italy respectively. It may be required that they be put out of commission. The French Government is required to place at the disposal of the German authorities all foreign aeroplanes now

located in unoccupied territory or to prevent the continuation of their flights. These planes are to be delivered to the German military authorities.

### XIII

The French Government obligates itself to take precautions that all military facilities, establishments, and materials in the territory to be occupied by German troops be surrendered undamaged to the German troops. In addition, it shall see to it that ports, industrial establishments, and harbour facilities remain in their present state and that they be preserved undestroyed and undamaged in any way. The same conditions apply to transportation and communications, routes and facilities of all kinds, particularly with regard to railroads, highways, and canals, the entire telegraph and telephone systems, as well as waterways and coastal communications services. Moreover, the French Government obligates itself to undertake, on order from the German High Command, all necessary repairs.

The French Government will take steps to maintain in service in occupied territory the necessary technical personnel and rolling stock for railways and other means of communication, such service to be at a level corresponding to peace-time conditions.

### XIV

All radio transmitters now in French territory shall cease broadcasting immediately. The resumption of radio broadcasting in unoccupied territory shall be subject to special regulation.

### XV

The French Government undertakes to facilitate freight traffic between the German Reich and Italy through unoccupied territory, to the extent required by the German Government.

### XVI

The French Government will proceed, in agreement with the German officials concerned, to the repatriation of the population in occupied territory.

### XVII

The French Government undertakes to prevent any transfer of valuables of an economic nature or of provisions from the territory to be occupied by German troops into unoccupied territory or abroad. These valuables and provisions now located in occupied territory may be disposed of only with the consent of the Government of the Reich, it being understood that the German Government will take into account what may be necessary to the life of the population of the unoccupied territories.

### XVIII

The expense of maintaining the German forces of occupation in French territory will be borne by the French Government.

## XIX

All German prisoners of war and German civil prisoners, including those under arrest and sentence who were arrested and sentenced for acts committed in favour of the German Reich, are to be turned over to the German troops immediately.

The French Government is obliged to surrender on demand all German subjects named by the Government of the Reich who are at present in France, in French possessions, colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories.

The French Government obligates itself to prevent the transfer of German prisoners of war or civil prisoners from France into French possessions or abroad. In regard to prisoners already transferred out of France, as well as German prisoners of war who are sick, wounded, or otherwise unable to travel, exact lists indicating their places of residence must be furnished. The German High Command assumes the care of sick or wounded German prisoners of war.

## XX

Members of the French armed forces now prisoners of the German army will remain prisoners of war until the conclusion of peace.

## XXI

The French Government is responsible for the safe keeping of all objects and valuables which are to be delivered in good condition or held at the disposition of Germany, or the transfer of which outside France is forbidden, according to the terms of this agreement. The French Government will be obligated to pay compensation with interest for any destruction, damage, or removal contrary to the present Agreement.

## XXII

A German Armistice Commission, acting under the orders of the German High Command, will regulate and supervise the execution of the Armistice Agreement.

The Armistice Commission is, in addition, entrusted with the task of insuring the necessary conformity of this Agreement with the Franco-Italian Armistice Agreement. The French Government will appoint to the seat of the German Armistice Commission a delegation to represent French interests and to receive orders for the execution of the Agreement from the German Armistice Commission.

## XXIII

This Armistice Agreement will become effective as soon as the French Government shall also have reached with the Italian Government an agreement relative to the cessation of hostilities. The cessation of hostilities will take place six hours after the

Italian Government shall have announced to the Government of the Reich the conclusion of such an agreement.

The Government of the Reich will notify the French Government of the proper time by radio.

#### XXIV

The present Armistice Agreement is valid until the conclusion of the peace treaty. It may be terminated at any moment, effective immediately, by the German Government, if the French Government fails to fulfil the obligations assumed by it in the present Agreement.

The present Armistice Agreement was signed June 22, 1940, at six-fifty o'clock, German summer time, in the Forest of Compiègne.

HUNTZIGER.  
KEITEL.

#### FRANCO-ITALIAN ARMISTICE

ARTICLE 1. France will cease hostilities in her continental territory, in French North Africa, in the colonies, and in territories under French mandate. France will also cease hostilities in the air and on the sea.

ARTICLE 2. When the armistice goes into effect, and for the duration of the armistice, Italian troops will stand on their advanced lines in all theatres of operations.

ARTICLE 3. In French continental territory, a zone situated between the lines referred to in Article 2 and a line drawn fifty kilometres as the crow flies beyond the Italian lines proper shall be demilitarized for the duration of the armistice.

In Tunisia, the militarized zone between the present Libyan-Tunisian frontier and the line drawn on the attached map shall be demilitarized for the duration of the armistice. In Algeria and in French African territories south of Algeria bordering on Libya, a zone 200 kilometres wide adjoining the Libyan frontier shall be demilitarized for the duration of the armistice. For the duration of hostilities between Italy and the British Empire and for the duration of the armistice, the French Somaliland coast shall be entirely demilitarized. Italy shall have full and constant right to use the port of Jibuti with all its equipment, together with the French section of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railway, for all kinds of transport.

ARTICLE 4 provides that zones to be demilitarized shall be evacuated by French troops within ten days, except for the personnel necessary to supervise and maintain fortifications and military buildings.

ARTICLE 5 provides for the removal within 15 days of such arms and supplies in the demilitarized zones as Italy does not

require France to surrender under Article 10. Fixed armaments in the coastal territory of French Somaliland are to be rendered useless.

ARTICLE 6 requires that so long as hostilities continue between Italy and Britain the maritime fortified areas and naval bases of Toulon, Bizerta, Ajaccio, and Oran shall be demilitarized.

ARTICLES 7 AND 8 concern the procedure to be followed in demilitarizing the areas and bases mentioned in Article 6.

ARTICLES 9 TO 26 parallel in a general way the main provisions in Articles 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21, and 24 of the German armistice.

The French people were left ignorant of these terrible treaties. They doubtless are ignorant of them even to-day because the agreements never seem to have been published extensively in the French press. On the contrary, as we have seen, the people realized very soon the fact of the armistice demand, and this fact broke their spirit. The announcements of Marshal Pétain, followed by those of Baudouin, had informed our soldiers on June 17 that France had demanded an armistice; in other words, that we admitted we were beaten, and that we wished to cease fighting.

Such a piece of news could only have one effect on troops that were already exhausted, that were continuing the struggle by a prodigious effort of courage: it was to make them throw down their arms. On June 17 the Berlin radio which announced the French demand for an armistice added, mercilessly: 'The pursuit of the French Army continues.' The Germans themselves did not stop fighting. They did not stop taking prisoners. In fact it was in these last few days that they took the great majority of the two million Frenchmen they still hold, whom they exploit as labourers and hostages, and whom they starve.

Two million French prisoners; that represents more than one-third of the French Army and more than 5 per cent of the French nation. It is equal to five million prisoners being taken out of the American nation. This figure of two million represents without doubt the greatest number of men ever captured in war by one nation from another. How could this have been attained? Essentially because Hitler has delayed the negotiations for the armistice after the Bordeaux Government had announced them to the French. On June 5, 1940, before the Battle of the Somme, the number of French soldiers in German hands hardly exceeded half a million.

After the Battle of the Somme the situation became confused because of the mêlée of French troops in retreat and German tank units that threw themselves amongst the French, passed them, and encircled them. But there was still fighting.

During the interminable days that elapsed between the moment when Marshal Pétain demanded an armistice (June 17) and the moment when the Germans accepted (June 22) the Germans did not stop carrying off amazed French soldiers who believed the war was over. During

the armistice negotiations with Italy, they continued, since they had decided the German agreement did not become effective until after the signing of the Italian armistice (June 25).

In these last few days the French soldiers, stunned by the news of the demand for an armistice, scattered and exhausted, received neither orders nor munitions, nor supplies of any sort ; ignorant of the very position of the enemy and harried from every direction by inhuman machines, they were gathered in like sheep. A few hundred thousand mechanized Germans in caterpillars, on wheels, in aeroplanes, circulating above and among five million Allied soldiers disorganized, dead with fatigue, and paralysed by a flood of refugees, could take just as many prisoners as they wanted.

Between the fifth and the twenty-fifth of June Hitler collected nearly one and a half million French soldiers ; of these about a million were taken between the seventeenth and the twenty-fifth of June. If he had wanted to delay the negotiations further he could have taken another three or four million, in other words the entire French Army. But he would have found the added profit an encumbrance.

With the two million prisoners, who represent the youth of the French nation, Hitler deprived France of an indispensable force for cultivating the soil, assuring industrial production, and continuing family life. He was going to exercise a physical pressure on France, as a man who holds his foot on the chest of another man.

But he gave himself another weapon : moral pressure. The spectacle of the plight of the prisoners was meant to scare the French people and their Government into obedience ; it was to break the vestiges of resistance in France and to lead to her total submission. Hitler intended to gain little by little control (1) of the empire, (2) of the fleet, and (3) of the French who wanted to continue the struggle against Germany on foreign soil.

Let us remark in passing that by July, 1941, Hitler had already obtained from Vichy important action on each of these three points. Germans and Italians had utilized—at least by means of aeroplane—the bases in Syria and doubtless elsewhere, at Casablanca and Dakar. Admiral Darlan officially threatened England about using the French fleet against the Navy. Certain French diplomatic agents in foreign countries conducted violent campaigns of slander and espionage against Frenchmen who continued to fight against Germany on foreign soil. They made reports on them and tried to compromise them, by any means at all, in such a way as to give a foundation to the attacks made against them in the German-controlled French press—in such a way, above all, as to make public opinion in France accept the denationalization measures and the condemnations pronounced against these good Frenchmen by Vichy at the instigation of Germany. Above all this and whether it is a matter of seizing the empire or the fleet, or of discrediting Frenchmen who continued the fight, the supreme purpose of Hitler is evidently to procure a French entry into the war on the side of Germany against England.

How can one justify an armistice which was accepted on the pretext of preserving the French individuals upon whom the future of the country depended, and which didn't even permit a softening of the lot of these unhappy prisoners Hitler can hold indefinitely? How can anyone claim that it is saving the material life of France as long as it permits Germany to retain and slowly destroy the best of French youth?

It does not seem that the individual destinies of the French people would have been more dramatic if the armistice had not been signed. And from the general point of view, keeping the French fleet and the empire in the fight on the side of the English would have hastened the Allies' victory—that victory which means the deliverance of every Frenchman.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FREE FRENCH FORCES FORM IN LONDON

IN LEAVING BORDEAUX for London on June 18 General de Gaulle knew, as everyone did, that the new Government had decided to sign the armistice. He certainly was ignorant of the detailed conditions of this armistice, yet he knew the Germans well enough to foresee the spirit of it. The situation gave France two alternatives, and only two : to surrender or to continue the war, to despair of everything or to hope despite everything. And De Gaulle would not despair.

He landed at the Croydon aerodrome near London on the morning of June 18, looking for the first time in his life worn out and disgusted. But inwardly he remained unshaken. To Winston Churchill, who received him early in the afternoon, he explained how he had made up his mind on what his own course would be : he would to the end support England, which was continuing to struggle. England was still France's ally, and only the final victory of England and of her allies could one day liberate France.

On that June 18 General de Gaulle began the third great struggle of his life. The first one he had undertaken between 1919 and 1939, when, backed up by his experiences on the Marne, at Verdun, and by twenty years of technical studies, he tried to give France the mechanized army which would have saved it. His second struggle he carried on at Laon and Abbeville. Now that France had fallen he was determined to reconquer France.

What means did he have at his disposal ? He had no money, no arms, no troops, no staff. In all truth he didn't even have an exact idea of what the attitude of the English would be, let alone that of the French. His family was still in France. He was staying in an ordinary and dismal hotel room, at the Rubens near Westminster, without any facilities for working. The leather bag that was his only piece baggage brought from France contained only a photograph of his wife

and three children, a pair of long uniform trousers, and four khaki shirts. He was completely broke, not having taken time to collect his pay, three-quarters of which was set aside for his family anyway. But none of these things mattered. In spite of everything he decided on his goal. He had firmly in mind the following objectives :

To continue the war at the side of England ;

To preserve that part of our colonial empire not yet occupied by the enemy and not yet defeated ;

To deliver France from the invader and restore her to her full liberty and greatness.

For that, the general needed troops, arms, and money, all things of which he had, at the moment, none. He didn't speak a word of English, which did not make the negotiations any easier. But De Gaulle did not doubt for one second that he would be successful. He believed in the strength of just causes and in the force of faith. He threw himself into action without knowing whether anyone would follow him. Over the English radio he addressed the people of France. Here's what he said to them on June 18 :

The chiefs who have been at the head of the French armies for many years have formed a Government.

This Government, alleging the defeat of our armies, has made contact with the enemy to put an end to the fight.

There is no question that we have been, that we are, swamped by the mechanical strength of the enemy on the ground and in the air.

. Far more than by their numbers, we are thrown back by the tanks, the aeroplanes, and the strategy of the Germans. It is the tanks, the aeroplanes, and the strategy of the Germans which surprised our chiefs and brought them to the point where they are to-day.

But has the last word been said ? Is all hope gone ? Is the defeat final ? No !

Believe me, for I speak to you with full knowledge of what I say. I tell you that nothing is lost for France. The very same means that conquered us can be used to give us one day the victory.

*For France is not alone. She is not alone. She is not alone. She has a vast empire behind her. She can form a coalition with the British Empire, which holds the seas and is continuing the struggle. She can, like England, have limitless access to the immense industrial powers of the United States.*

This war is not limited to the territory of our unhappy land. This war has not been decided by the Battle of France. This war is a world war. All our mistakes, all our delays, all our suffering, do not alter the fact that there exist in the world all the means needed to crush our enemies some day. Although we are to-day

crushed by mechanized force, we can in the future conquer through superior mechanized force. Therein lies the destiny of the world.

I, General de Gaulle, speaking from London, invite the French officers and soldiers who may be in British territory, now or at a later date, with their arms or without their arms—I invite the engineers and the workers skilled in the manufacture of armaments who may be, now or in the future, on British soil—to get in touch with me.

Whatever may come, the flame of French resistance must never be extinguished ; and it will not be extinguished.

On the next day, he made his appeal again, this time in the following terms :

At the present hour all Frenchmen understand that the ordinary forms of power have disappeared.

In the face of the confusion of French arms, in the face of the disintegration of a Government fallen under subjugation to the enemy, in the face of the paralysis of all our institutions—I, General de Gaulle, French soldier and chief, assume the right to speak in the name of France.

In the name of France I make the following formal declaration :

Every Frenchman who is bearing arms has a sacred duty to continue resistance.

To lay down arms, to evacuate a military position, to relinquish even the smallest slice of French land to the enemy would be a crime against the nation.

At the present hour I speak, above all, for French North Africa, for an intact North Africa.

The Italian armistice is a clumsy trap.

In the Africa of Clauzel, of Eugeaud, of Lyautey, of Noguès, every man possessing a shred of honour must refuse to carry out the conditions imposed by the enemy.

We must not let the panic which has gripped Bordeaux spread overseas.

Soldiers of France, wherever you may be, arise !

This courageous voice was not crying in the desert. Even on the nineteenth of June, on the day following the first appeal, a few volunteers knocked at the door of the little house on Seymour Place that friends had lent to the general. There was no orderly at the door, no secretary to write down their names. Faithful Lieutenant de Courcel took charge of the work himself. Daily he found at the door an ever-increasing flood of Frenchmen of all types and descriptions : officers and soldiers who had been in London on official missions : évacués from Dunkirk ; sailors from ships stationed in the ports ; soldiers back from Norway ; civilians temporarily or permanently resident in England ; civilians and soldiers who had just escaped from France to continue the war rather than be disarmed by the Germans.

Meanwhile the Government of France was preparing to sign the armistice. On June 22 De Gaulle pointed out to Frenchmen the depths of the abyss into which they were being pushed. He called them once more to hope and to action :

The French Government, after asking for an armistice, has now learned the terms dictated by the enemy.

In accordance with these conditions the French forces on the ground, on the sea, and in the air would be entirely demobilized ; our arms would be surrendered, French territory would be completely occupied, and the French Government would fall completely under the domination of Germany and Italy.

It is plain to everyone that such an armistice would spell not only surrender but also complete slavery.

Now, many Frenchmen will not accept either surrender or slavery for reasons to which we may give the names of honour, common sense, the highest interests of the country.

I say honour, because France undertook not to lay down its arms except by agreement with her allies. So long as her allies continue the war her Government has no right to surrender to the enemy. The Polish Government, the Norwegian Government, the Belgian Government, the Dutch Government, the Luxemburg Government, though driven from their territory, have all understood their duty in that sense.

I say common sense, because it is absurd to consider the war lost. True, we have undergone a great defeat. A bad military system, mistakes committed in the conduct of operations, the defeatist spirit of the Government during the final days of the conflict all led us to the loss of the Battle of France. But we still have a vast empire, a fleet still intact, a great deal of gold. We still have allies whose resources are enormous and who are in command of the seas. We still have untapped facilities for manufacturing equipment. The same conditions of war which led us to defeat by 5,000 aeroplanes and 6,000 tanks can lead us to-morrow to victory by 20,000 tanks and 20,000 aeroplanes.

I say the highest interests of the country, because this war is not a Franco-German war that can be decided by a single battle. It is a world war. *No one can foresee whether the peoples that are neutral to-day will remain neutral to-morrow, or if the allies of Germany will always remain her allies.* If the forces of liberty triumph finally over the forces of slavery, what would be the fate of a France which had submitted to the domination of the enemy ?

Honour, common sense, the highest interests of the country command all free Frenchmen to continue the combat, wherever they may be and with any means they may have at their disposal.

It is then imperative to bring together wherever it may be possible a French force as large as possible. All French military

elements and all French facilities for the production of armaments must be organized wherever they can be collected.

I, General de Gaulle, shall undertake here in England this national task.

I invite all French soldiers of the armies of land, sea, and air, I invite engineers and French workers expert in armament manufacture who may be now in British territory or able to reach British territory, to join me.

I invite the officers and soldiers, the sailors and aviators of the French forces of land, sea, and air, wherever they may be stationed at present, to put themselves in communication with me.

I invite all Frenchmen who wish to remain free to hear me and follow me.

Long live Free France, in honour and independence !

The armistice with Germany was signed on June 22. It was impossible to doubt that Italy, too, would obtain the assent of the French Government to the terms imposed by her. De Gaulle issued still another protest, filled with courage and hope :

To-night I will say simply, because someone must say it, that unspeakable shame and revolt rise in the hearts of all good Frenchmen.

It is useless to elaborate on the various terms of the Armistices between France and Germany and France and Italy. They can be summed up in few words : France and the French are delivered over, hands and feet bound, to the enemy.

But even though the surrender is written down on paper, the number of our men, women, youths, and children who are not resigned to it, who will not accept it, who want none of it, is legion.

France is like a boxer floored by a terrific punch. She is down for the count. But she knows, she feels, that life still beats strong and deep within her. She knows, she feels, that the fight is not over, that the cause is not given up.

She knows, she feels, that she deserves a great deal better than the slavery accepted by the Government of Bordeaux.

She knows, she feels, that in her empire powerful forces of resistance stand ready to save her honour. Already the will to continue the war has been revealed at many points in French overseas territories.

She knows, she feels, that her allies are more than ever resolved to fight and conquer.

She sees in the new world enormous material and moral strength which perhaps will arise one day to crush the enemies of liberty.

We must have an ideal. We must have hope. Somewhere the flame of French resistance must glimmer and burst into fire.

French officers, French soldiers, French sailors, French pilots, French engineers, wherever you may be, make a supreme effort

to join those who wish to continue to fight. One day, I give you my promise, our forces—a picked French army, a mechanized land, sea, and air force—in common action with our allies will restore liberty to the world and greatness to France.

On June 23 the French Government stripped General de Gaulle of his military rank. In an official statement the Government declares that he will be tried at 'the earliest court martial' for refusing to return to his post and for addressing appeals to French officers, soldiers, and civilians from abroad.

But De Gaulle was not intimidated by this action. He awaited it since he left Bordeaux.

Now that the armistice had been signed, now that it was all over, now that protests were in vain, it only remained to demand an accounting of the whole series of events. De Gaulle addressed his former chief, Marshal Pétain, head of the French state :

Marshal Pétain, it is a French soldier who speaks to you over the air waves, over the ocean.

Yesterday I heard your voice, which I know so well. I was moved. I listened to what you said to the French people to justify what you have done.

You depicted first of all the military inferiority which caused our defeat. Then you said that, faced with a desperate situation, you took power in order to obtain an honourable armistice from the enemy.

Next, you declared that there were only two alternatives in the face of the conditions imposed by the enemy : accept them and remain in Bordeaux, or refuse them and take refuge in the empire to continue the war. You thought it your duty to stay in Bordeaux.

Finally, you recognized that the fate of the French people would be very harsh. But you called on the people to sustain themselves by hard work and discipline.

In truth our military inferiority has been terrible. But what was the source of our inferiority ?

It arose from a bad military system. France was struck down, not at all by the number of the German forces, not at all by their greater courage, but solely by the enemy's mechanized striking power. Every man who fought in the army is aware of that. If France did not have an equal mechanized force, if she had equipped herself with an army built along purely defensive lines whose was the fault, Marshal ?

You, who were head of our military organization after the war of 1914-18, you who were generalissimo up to 1932, you who were Minister of War in 1935, you who were the highest military personage of our country—did you ever support, urge, or demand that the necessary changes be made in this bad system ?

However, on the basis of the glorious services that you rendered

during the last war, you have taken upon yourself the responsibility of asking for an armistice.

You were led to believe, Marshal, that an armistice, demanded of soldiers by the great soldier that you are, would be honourable for France. I think you must have a clearer view of it now. This armistice is dishonourable. Two-thirds of our territory occupied by the enemy—and what an enemy! Our entire army demobilized. Our officers and soldiers captured by the enemy to remain prisoners. Our fleet, our planes, our tanks, our arms, handed over intact so that the enemy may use them against our own allies. The country, the Government, you yourself, reduced to slavery.

We didn't need you, Marshal, to obtain and accept such conditions of slavery. We didn't need the Conqueror of Verdun. Anybody would have done as well.

But you thought, you said, that you could, that you should subscribe to such terms. You considered all plans for continuing resistance in the empire absurd. You considered the efforts that our ally the British Empire is making and will continue to make negligible. You rejected beforehand the great amount of help offered by America. You played a losing hand, threw in your cards, emptied our pockets as though we didn't have a single trump left. There, plain to be seen, are the effects of the profound discouragement, the disintegration in the will to resist, of our home forces.

And in the same breath, Marshal, you call upon France—a France surrendered, pillaged, and enslaved—to go back to work, to build anew and rise from its ruins. But in what atmosphere, by what means, in the name of what do you expect her to rise again under the German jack-boot and the Italian heel?

Yes, France will rise again. She will rise in liberty. She will rise in victory. Throughout the empire, throughout the world, even here, French forces are forming and organizing. The day will come when our arms, reforged far from home but well sharpened, will join those of our allies and perhaps still others, and will bring us home in triumph to the soil of the nation.

Then, indeed, we shall remake France.

The deep accent of sincerity in these appeals awakened echoes in France and in the whole world. People in other countries understood that the spirit of France was not dead. People in France felt that because of General de Gaulle the name of Frenchman was still an honourable designation. Volunteers continued to sign up.

Winston Churchill, who for years had kept warning the world of the German menace and who had always remained a staunch friend of France, grasped immediately the importance of the movement launched by De Gaulle. He decided at once to recognize in the person of the general the leader of free Frenchmen who would choose to join him. General de Gaulle announced this great piece of news on June 28:

The measure that the British Government has just taken in recognizing me as head of the Free French has great importance and profound significance.

This measure allows the Free French to organize to continue the war beside our allies.

This measure means that the Free French and our allies will work together until the final victory.

Therefore I have made the following decisions :

(1) I take under my authority all Frenchmen who remain on British territory or who come there in the future.

(2) A French land, sea, and air force will be formed immediately. For the time being this force will be composed of volunteers. This force will co-operate immediately with any organized French resistance anywhere in the French empire. I call on all French military men of land, sea, and air forces to join it. I urge all youths and men able to bear arms to enlist.

(3) All French soldiers, sailors, and pilots, wherever they may be, have a sacred duty to resist the enemy. If circumstances place them in danger of having to surrender their arms, their planes, or their ships they should escape immediately with their arms, their planes, or their ships to the nearest point of French resistance. If no such point is within their reach they should proceed immediately to British territory, where they will be under my orders.

(4) There is here created a French organization for the manufacture and purchase of armaments and a French organization for research into the improvement of war materials.

Generals, higher commanders, governors of the colonies, communicate with me so that we may unite our efforts and save French territories. In spite of the capitulations already made by so many of those responsible for the honour of the flag and the greatness of the nation, Free France has not ceased to exist. We shall prove it by arms.

At the very moment when co-operation between France and England, so tragically broken at Bordeaux, was about to be reborn in London between General de Gaulle and Winston Churchill, the terrible incident of Oran seemed about to break it up entirely. The English fleet felt itself forced to destroy several French vessels at Oran, to make sure that the Germans should never be able to use them.

General de Gaulle was profoundly shaken, as might be imagined. However, he did not lose his perspective and he gave expression to it immediately. He declared on July 8 :

Amidst the temporary liquidation of the French forces following on the capitulation a particularly cruel episode took place on July 3. I mean, of course, the frightful bombardment at Oran.

I shall speak of it plainly, straightforwardly, for in a drama in which each people is playing for its life men of good will must

have the courage to look circumstances in the face and describe them frankly. First of all, I should like to say this : there is not a single Frenchman who did not feel grief and anger when he learned that ships of the French fleet had been sunk by our allies. This grief, this anger, arises from the innermost depths of our feelings.

There is no reason to conceal these feelings. So far as I am concerned I express them openly. So, addressing the English, I urge them to spare us and themselves any attempt to see in this hateful tragedy a direct naval success. It would be unjust and out of place.

The ships at Oran were in all truth in no condition to fight. They were at anchor with no chance whatever to manœuvre or scatter. Their officers and men had been fretting for two weeks under a terrific psychological strain. They let the English vessels fire the first broadsides, and at sea, as everyone knows, those are the decisive ones at such distances. The destruction of the ships was not the result of a glorious fight. As a French soldier I say that to our English allies with all the more frankness because I have even more admiration for them in naval matters. To the French, I ask them to consider the whole situation from the only point of view that can count in the final analysis, I mean from the point of view of ultimate victory and liberation. By virtue of a dishonourable obligation the Government in Bordeaux had agreed to place our ships at the disposal of the enemy. There's not the slightest doubt that through both principle and necessity the enemy would have used them, either against England or against our own empire. Well, without beating about the bush, I say that it was better that they be destroyed.

I would rather know that even the *Dunkerque*, our fine, beloved, powerful *Dunkerque*, was on the bottom of the sea before Mers-El-Kebir, than to see it one day, manned by Germans, bombard the English ports, not to mention Algiers, Casablanca, or Dakar.

In furnishing the motivating cause for this fratricidal bombardment at Oran, then trying to turn the just anger of Frenchmen against our betrayed allies, the Government of Bordeaux is only playing its predestined part, the part of slavery.

In exploiting what happened to incite the French and English peoples against each other, the enemy is only playing his part, the part of the conqueror.

In seeing the drama for what it was, I mean for a deplorable and hateful incident of war, but at the same time keeping it from resulting in psychological antagonism between the English and the French, all far-sighted men among both peoples will be playing their part, their part as patriots.

Thoughtful Englishmen cannot fail to see that no victory would be possible for them if the soul of France ever went over to the enemy.

Frenchmen worthy of the name must recognize that an English defeat would seal for ever their subjugation.

Whatever happens, even though one of the two is temporarily under the yoke of the common enemy, our two peoples, our two great peoples, will remain bound to each other. They will win together or both will succumb.

For those Frenchmen who still remain free to act in accordance with the honour and the best interests of France, I declare in their name that they have once and for all made their difficult decision.

They have made their decision, once and for all, to fight.

It was after the Oran affair during the early part of July, 1940, that I saw General de Gaulle in London. I had just reached England, for I had not wanted to leave France until after the signing of the two armistice agreements. My first calls were on the French Embassy, where the military attaché legally demobilized me, and at the headquarters of General de Gaulle. This was at St. Stephen's House, a large, drab building on the Victoria Embankment on the Thames. The sky was grey the day I arrived, and the river slipped along gloomily between the blackened banks crowded with docks and warehouses. The entrance to the building was uninspiring. However, my rather morose frame of mind—justified by what I had seen and heard during the fall of France—disappeared like a flash when I saw two of our sailors, two little Bretons, with their red-tasselled caps ! I almost hugged them going up in the lift.

In an office on the first floor I found two or three fellow newspaper-men and officers from Paris now working for Free France. How little it takes to restore hope to someone who wants to hope ! The sight of a few familiar faces and the knowledge that other Frenchmen had like myself kept their confidence in the Anglo-French alliance to defeat Germany filled me with joy.

When I went in to see General de Gaulle he rose to his full height to shake hands. I then realized vividly what I had been told : that he stands 6 feet 4 inches at least in height and weighs some 190 pounds. The wall behind him was covered with two maps : one of France and one of Africa on which the French colonial holdings were marked in brilliant red. He sat down again behind his desk, offered me a cigarette—one of the forty-odd Players he smokes daily—and lit one himself. He was in no hurry to talk, and watched me, completely composed and unruffled, his eyes slightly sunken in his rough-hewn face. This man bore none of the marks of our epoch. There was about him something elemental which gave him force, the expression of a soldier and a peasant. In any case he waited for me to begin. I told him about my departure from France with a shipload of Polish troops and, going back a little, described the last days of our army that he had not witnessed. I mentioned the name of Weygand and instantly he gave a start.

"Weygand," he snorted, "you and your Weygand. You've seen what he's capable of."

I couldn't help laughing as I replied, "He's *your* Weygand, General. You know him still better than I do."

But he was off and he talked. Leaning back in his chair, his wide shoulders against the wall, his eyes half-closed to avoid smoke from the cigarette hanging from his lips, he gave me his views on the progress of the fighting after the nineteenth of May, 1940, when General Weygand took command.

"We should have tried by all means," he pointed out, "to break the German spearhead advancing toward the sea. One way would have been to realign the forces of the north and those of the south, and attack in the general direction of Arras, for example. Even granted that this attempt had proved impossible to carry out and that the whole battle was lost and the Germans couldn't be prevented from reaching the Channel and cutting our armies in two, we shouldn't have been satisfied to organize on the Somme a new defensive battle in the style of 1918. We should have done as the Germans did : given up the continuous front and manœuvred. It may be that victory could not have been brought into our camp during the Battle of France in any case. But the battle would, at all events, have taken a completely different turn from what it did. At the time of the stand on the Somme, about June 5, we still had more than a thousand usable tanks. Instead of scattering this material and using it along with the rest of our unhappy troops simply as stop-gaps in the fixed front we should have set up two units of, say 500 tanks each. We should have based one on the Basse Seine region between Rouen and Paris, with units of all kinds, and the other between the Seine and the Marne along with the rest of our troops. The Germans would have had to think twice before pushing their way farther south between two such mobile armies provided they were well commanded. There would have been a fight instead of a cataclysm. The country would have had time to face up to the situation. The High Command and the Government, if they had been capable of wanting it that way, would have been able to safeguard the evacuation of certain materials as well as certain military and civilian elements to North Africa. Africa ! that's where we should have made preparations for the next battle, the battle which, fought in conjunction with the British, would have hastened victory. From the very moment when we felt that things were going wrong, as early as the sixteenth of May when our lines broke behind the Meuse, we should have made this great decision and begun to carry it out. Even if later we had been determined at all costs to sign the armistice agreements, the presence of a powerful reserve force in North Africa would have been of enormous benefit to France on the mainland in its daily transactions with the Germans. . . ."

General de Gaulle spoke in the strong, low, slightly drawling voice typical of a Frenchman of the north. He didn't get excited, but every feature, every gesture, expressed anger and scorn—the anger and scorn

of a man who felt keenly what the effects of bold and energetic action might have been at the very moment of the battle when our politicians and generals, who were too old or too indifferent, bowed before the German military machine.

I left General de Gaulle, not carried away—he's too cold to produce that impression—but convinced that I had just seen a *man*. I should have liked to believe that he was too harsh on our great military leaders. I couldn't. After all, those leaders had quit the war. I had a strong sense of the value of De Gaulle's presence in London. Behind him, and behind him alone, could those of us who continued to uphold France uphold her to the end. Without him, all of us—the two Breton sailors in the lift and all Frenchmen who still have hope and myself—we would be homeless waifs without ties and without power.

During the first month of France's captivity the Germans forbade the French in both occupied and unoccupied territory to celebrate the Fourteenth of July. General de Gaulle was determined to observe the French national holiday by ceremonies in London. He made a pilgrimage on the morning of July 14 first to the Cenotaph of the Unknown Soldier, at Whitehall, then to the statue of Marshal Foch. The people of London divided their cheers between the Free French forces which were making their first public appearance in England, clad in their British battle dress with the French helmets and the tricolour badge 'France' on the left shoulder, and General de Gaulle himself. The general had spoken on the radio on the previous evening.

On this eve of the Fourteenth of July [he said] the thoughts of every Frenchman turn to France and to France alone. Not of course that we should stay sunk in anguish or buried in resignation. Excessive grief and abnegation would play completely into the hands of our conquerors of the moment. They would justify only too well the remorse or the self-interest of those who surrendered.

Since those whose duty it was to hold high the sword of France have let it fall broken I have snatched up the shattered stump. I am able to announce that there already exists under my orders a considerable military force capable of fighting at a moment's notice on land, on sea, or in the air. I can say further that this force is growing day by day. And I want to testify to the magnificent quality of French youth which is hurrying to enlist in it. We cannot doubt for an instant that this force will go on growing larger with every day the war continues. Frenchmen, take pride in the knowledge that you still have a fighting army.

If, then, this Fourteenth of July is a day of mourning for the nation, it should be at the same time a day of secret hope. Yes, the victory will be won. And it will be won, I promise you, with the help of French arms.

That Fourteenth of July, 1940, in London, I saw many Frenchmen who were deeply moved. We felt that no other generation of Frenchmen in any period had suffered a disaster so widespread, or so rapid, or so readily accepted by the highest responsible leaders. We remembered the French army, magnificent in youth and spirit, which one year previously in Paris had marched down the Champs Elysées in the presence of the French Government and Mr. Winston Churchill. This foremost of Englishmen with his habitual warmth of spirit also remembered that day. He made this evident in these few words he broadcast on the radio :

Who could foresee what the course of a year would bring ? Who can foresee what the course of other years will bring ? Faith is given to us as a help and comfort when we stand in awe before the unfurling scroll of human destiny. And I proclaim my faith that some of us will live to see a Fourteenth of July when a liberated France will once again rejoice in her greatness and in her glory, and once again stand forward as the champion of the freedom and the rights of man. When that day dawns, as dawn it will, the soul of France will turn with comprehension and kindness to those Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, wherever they may be, who in the darkest hour did not despair of the Republic.

This declaration of the English Premier comforted all of us and I know what it meant to General de Gaulle.

Enthusiastic as he may appear in his declarations and actions when France is concerned, De Gaulle is temperamentally the most phlegmatic man in the world. When he was a boy there was already a joke among his relatives about "Charles having fallen into the family icebox." This calm disposition, rather unusual in a Frenchman, has impressed many Englishmen.

On the eighteenth of July, 1940, Madame de Gaulle with her daughters Elizabeth and Anne and her son Philip came very unexpectedly to join the general, who had received no news from them for several weeks. Without any possibility of letting him know, they had been able to leave Brest by one of the last boats. In fact they had no idea themselves about what he was doing when they landed in Falmouth. On the morning of the nineteenth Philip bought a paper, and the family, although unaccustomed to the English language, quickly understood the meaning of one of the headlines smeared across the front page : 'De Gaulle starts a Free French movement.'

Madame de Gaulle immediately phoned her husband's headquarters in London. The general was working when the telephone rang and Lieutenant de Courcel picked it up. "It is Mme. de Gaulle," said she ; "I am in Falmouth with the children."

"Ah," the general answered simply, taking the receiver, "it is you ?"

He gave orders for his family's journey to London and without another word continued his work.

That is De Gaulle.

The family went to live in a little cottage in the London suburbs. Amusingly enough their next-door neighbour turned out to be an English newspaper woman on the *Daily Herald*. Naturally her paper had complete details on the comings and goings of General de Gaulle until he found out the profession of his dangerous neighbour ! From then on he had to resort to all the ruses known to military science to get in and out of his house unnoticed.

Mme. de Gaulle is a quiet, unassuming, typically French woman. She met her husband in 1920 when he was a young captain and she was Yvonne Vendroux of a distinguished family of Calais. Calais is near Lille, De Gaulle's birthplace.

Accompanied by their families, both were visiting the famous annual painting exposition in Paris, *Le Salon d'Automne*, when the Vendroux and the De Gaulles found themselves side by side in front of a painting. A mutual friend introduced them and M. Vendroux invited everybody to tea. They had hardly time to sit down when Charles de Gaulle inadvertently spilled his cup of tea over the dress of Mlle Yvonne. This unexpected form of 'blitz' had far-reaching consequences : five months later Charles de Gaulle and Yvonne Vendroux were married.

In London the general leads the simplest life, working almost without any relaxation. Whenever possible he spends his Sundays among his family in a cottage he has rented for them in Sussex. During the whole year from June, 1940, to June, 1941, he is known to have week-ended twice with Mr. Winston Churchill and once with Sir Robert Vansittart. And still these trips were directly connected with the conduct of the war. His relations with the British Premier are excellent but he does not see him frequently. The daily work between the Free French forces and the English Government is carried on through the War Office, the so-called Morton Committee, especially concerned with French affairs, the Foreign Office, and the liaison officer with the Free French forces, Major General Spears.

The only diversion General de Gaulle allows himself in his normal day's work is lunch, which he takes regularly at 1.30 and usually at the restaurant of the Royal Automobile Club. He often adds to his meal some red burgundy wine, a glass of 'fine' (cognac from the Charentes), and a cigar.

The general is notably a great worker and he leaves it to no one to write a single line of his orders, decisions, or speeches. But he constantly puts the officers of his staff in terrible fits of anxiety through fear that some speech or broadcast will not be issued in time. It is not unusual to see one or two impatient but respectful aides waiting outside the heavy wooden door of the chief's office : "General, it is ten minutes to six ; have you thought of your talk for the British Broadcasting Company ? They are already waiting."

"All right, I'll see to it," retorts the general, who actually has not begun the speech because other overwhelming tasks have detained him.

And yet he sets to work and the awaited script comes out in time, well-written, strong, complete.

His orders and military decisions are often issued in similar circumstances. De Gaulle is always ready to act, because he is a man of one single idea—and that idea is France. His children follow him in their simple way. Elizabeth, his younger daughter, is studying to be a trained nurse. And her sister is only prevented from doing so because of illness. His son Philip enrolled as a cadet in the Free French naval school which has been set up in England. He serves on board the *President Theodore Tissier*, an old ship which has been engaged in oceanographic research and is now transformed into a school ship. He also takes courses at the school for topmen (*gabiers*) held on board one of the most famous vessels in the world, *La Belle Poule*, which brought the ashes of Napoleon back from St. Helena to France.

The brother and sister of the general are in unoccupied France, where their position is not an easy one. The secret sympathy of the population cannot relieve them from the pressure of the Nazis.

General de Gaulle is possessed of the type of cold-blooded intellect that simply cuts through complicated situations—the very situations Hitler and his propaganda untiringly work to create amongst us. When the Vichy Government brought to trial at Riom a prime minister like Daladier and a commander-in-chief like Gamelin, General de Gaulle, although he had no illusions about them nor much personal sympathy for them, went to their defence. He could not accept the hypocritical methods that Germany imposed on the Vichy Government. He denied that men who were indeed partly responsible for the French defeat could be accused over and above that with the crime of having started the war. He pointed out the only men responsible for the war, men who are to be found in Rome and Berlin.

The so-called court of justice which is sitting at Riom [he proclaimed on the thirteenth of July] was not set up, of course, for the purpose of punishing the men responsible for the momentary defeat of France. No serious person can see in it anything but window dressing.

The rascals who handed France over to the enemy by the surrender are trying to conceal their own crimes. So they hasten to put the blame on others.

They accuse some of having acquiesced in starting the war, others of having made inadequate preparations for it. They pretend to entertain the notion that Hitler and Mussolini are not in the least what they are, unscrupulous conquerors, and maintain that we could very easily have conciliated them before springing to arms.

On this point I admit that the men who claim power are completely right. Our country need not have gone to war—if she had gone down on her knees without fighting ; if she had allowed

the occupation of her territory ; if she had turned over her empire free of charge ; if she had sheathed her sword even before drawing it ; if she had accepted supinely dictation of her internal and external policies ; in short, if she had surrendered in advance.

Obviously a France dishonoured by such craven acceptance would no longer have been France. But that consideration seems to have escaped the prosecutors of Vichy.

Very well, I demand the right to make a deposition at the trials starting in Riom.

I think there are plenty of grounds for condemning those responsible—and I am going to name them.

Those who are guilty before God and before man of having started the war (and who, in all truth, proclaim it from the house tops) bear names that are reasonably well known. Their names are Hitler and Mussolini.

The men on our side who are guilty of faulty preparation for the war are, quite simply, the very men who were responsible for our preparations. This war was a mechanized war, and our armies were struck down by the mechanized strength of Germany. The men, whether ministers of war or generalissimos, who neglected to reform the French forces, they are the men who must bear the great responsibility for our disasters on the field of battle. Now I believe that at least two of them are at present at the head of the so-called Government in Vichy.

Finally, it seems clear to me that the men who are responsible for losing us the war are precisely the men in command or those who abused their authority to persuade us to throw down our arms while we still held them. I believe that at least two of them are at present at the head of the so-called Government in Vichy.

For these reasons it is very easy to draw the proper conclusions from the great debate over who was responsible. Justice will be done when the masters of Germany and Italy, who unleashed this war on the world, have been conquered. Justice will be done when the French leaders who proved themselves unworthy to be leaders have been condemned.

Look how it all hangs together. The punishment of both parties will be carried out simultaneously. Oh, certainly not to-morrow nor the day after, for justice moves slowly. But some day, have no doubt of it. For so long as the sun shines there will be justice, for the world and for France. Justice will be done. Victory will carry it out.

The hardy good sense of the French people is certainly not fooled about who is responsible for the disaster. The guilty men are not those who worked to defend France against an enemy which sought to enslave her. The culprits are simply those who by virtue of their office were entrusted with preparations for war and made no preparations : the men, ministers and high officers, who had the solemn duty to give the country a modern military

instrument and instead lulled the army with out-of-date ideas—those whose mission was to govern and command amidst the storm and who instead surrendered before having exhausted all means of fighting.

Some day surely a real trial of the culprits will take place in France. But there is every reason to believe that many of the prosecutors of to-day will find themselves then in the prisoner's dock.

Courageous words like these which defended France as a whole, and not only a part of France, and the constant enlisting of new volunteers gave the Free French forces an increasing vitality. The Free French now had headquarters at Carlton Gardens in the heart of London between Whitehall and St. James's, training camps in the country, its own planes on the flying fields, its own ships in the ports. . . . The typical British hero, Robinson Crusoe, by the use of both energy and intelligence, was able to reconstruct for himself a semblance of his former civilized life in the midst of his isolation. But what De Gaulle had undertaken was even more difficult : he was attempting to reconstruct a model of France on foreign soil with the grand idea of using it to save France herself.

In this case we have to face a reality which is cruel enough but which adds even more to the stature of General de Gaulle : his appeals directed from London to all parts of the world in the sinister silence of the French disaster seemed destined to move many hearts, to start a movement among many men, among hundreds of thousands of men in France and in the French empire. But no. This was not the case in the beginning. Volunteers arrived certainly, thousands of brave men. But this was not the general tendency. Such a tendency was not possible. The France of July, 1940, was too stupefied, too much the prisoner of the German invasion.

The volunteers, however, had some difficulty in understanding the apparent lethargy of their country for whom they were sacrificing everything. In London and in their camps in the English country they hoped ceaselessly for the arrival of reinforcements, of innumerable unknown compatriots, and also of certain leaders of public opinion. Many of them spoke of Reynaud, Mandel, Herriot, Louis Marin, Léon Blum, each according to his particular preference ; they also mentioned several army leaders. Often there was a rumour that this one or that one was about to arrive—people requested his London address. Volunteers questioned the general on this subject. Many Englishmen, sympathetic and gently critical at the same time, tipped off by the French volunteers, did the same.

But the expected personages did not arrive. All of France, submerged like an Atlantis, seemed to have disappeared, leaving on the surface only this enthusiastic little group of Frenchmen under De Gaulle.

It was then that the general demonstrated, for the first time in London, his unshakable calm, his self-possession. In London, he was the same as under the apple tree before the battlefield of Abbeville. He repeated, without showing the least emotion, his assurances of hope, his radio appeals, his attacks against defeatists. He pursued the work of raising the land, colonial, naval, and aerial units, of organizing propaganda and relations with the English. In his dealings with our friends and allies the general had a unique opportunity, that of working with Winston Churchill, with a man who was the best equipped to understand and appreciate him.

It is easy to see that giving support to a French movement, no matter what it was, in July, 1940, represented a decision heavy with risk for the head of the English Government. The French debacle had astounded public opinion in England. The statements broadcast by the ministers in Bordeaux and Vichy, violently anti-English statements issued to curry favour with the Germans, hadn't helped matters any. A British minister, therefore, had to have courage to affirm publicly that he retained his confidence in Frenchmen.

Mr. Churchill did this because he had always loved France, because he is an orator, a man of great poetic imagination who believes firmly that it is imagination that is the best stimulus of people's emotions and their ensuing acts. Mr. Churchill did this in short because he recognized in De Gaulle a man of the same metal as himself, a patriot, an orator, and from a certain point of view an artist in action.

When Churchill had received De Gaulle after his final return from France, the latter was in the same turbulent state of mind in which I had seen Clemenceau, Poincaré, and Foch at certain moments during the last war. "We cannot be sure whether France can be saved," my father had said at that time, "but at least we will have backed it to the limit."

Churchill wanted to help De Gaulle to the limit in backing the true France, which still wanted to fight, which didn't accept defeat. In the mortal peril in which he saw England herself he held out a helping hand to this adventurous Frenchman who wouldn't give up. And perhaps in doing this he recalled his troubled and pugnacious youth in that period of 1899 when he wrote these prophetic lines in *The River War* on his return from the Transvaal :

For I hope that if evil days should come upon our own country, and the last array which a collapsing empire could interpose between London and the invaders were dissolving in rout and ruin, there would be some—even in these modern days—who would not care to accustom themselves to a new order of things and tamely survive the disaster.

Mr. Churchill adopted General de Gaulle, as he had always adopted France : through an impulse of his heart. Weighed down with all the cares that one can imagine in such a crisis he was only able to see the general four or five times in the months of June and July, 1940. But

with a sure intuition he gave him his confidence. On August 7 he affirmed this confidence in a written agreement. This agreement was preceded by a letter from the British Prime Minister, printed below :

10 DOWNING STREET,  
WHITEHALL.

*August 7, 1940.*

MY DEAR GENERAL :

You have been good enough to inform me of your ideas relative to the organization, utilization, and conditions of service of the body of French volunteers now in process of formation under your command. That in your capacity, which is recognized by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, as head of all Free Frenchmen, wherever located, who rally around you for the defence of the Allied cause.

I am enclosing a memorandum which, subject to your acceptance, will constitute an agreement between us relative to the organization, utilization, and conditions of service of your forces.

I take this occasion to declare that His Majesty's Government is determined, when the Allied arms shall have won the victory, to insure the complete restoration of the independence and greatness of France.

Sincerely yours,  
WINSTON CHURCHILL.

And here is the reply of General de Gaulle :

4 CARLTON GARDENS,  
*August 7, 1940.*

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER :

You have been good enough to send me a memorandum relative to the organization, utilization, and conditions of service of the body of French volunteers now in process of formation under my command.

In my capacity, which is recognized by the Government of His Majesty in the United Kingdom, as head of all Free Frenchmen, wherever located, who join me for the defence of the Allied cause, I take pleasure in informing you that I accept the memorandum. It will be considered as constituting an agreement concluded between us relative to the questions concerned.

I am happy that on this occasion the British Government has come forward to state that it is determined, when the Allied arms shall have won the victory, to insure the complete restoration of the independence and greatness of France.

For my part, I assure you that the French force in process of formation has been set up to participate in operations against the common enemies (Germany, Italy, or any other hostile foreign power), including the defence of French territories and territories

under French mandate, and the defence of British territories, their lines of communication, and territories under British mandate.

Respectfully yours,  
GENERAL DE GAULLE.

This was a remarkable state of affairs, one unprecedented in French history. An isolated Frenchman without other strength than his moral authority was admitted to an official status by a foreign Government. To the Government of England, to Churchill, General de Gaulle stood for the France which refused to cede to Germany. He was the leader of the French determined to continue the fight wherever necessary and in every circumstance except against Frenchmen.

Here is the text of the agreement. It speaks for itself better than any analysis could :

#### AGREEMENT

##### I

1. General de Gaulle is proceeding to form a French force made up of volunteers. This force, which comprises naval, land, and air units, plus technical and scientific elements, will be organized and employed against our common enemies.

2. This force may never bear arms against France.

##### II

1. This force will retain, to the fullest measure possible, its character as a French force, with respect to the personnel, particularly in all matters relating to discipline, language, promotions, and distinctions.

2. To the extent necessary for its equipment, this force will have priority of procurement with respect to the property and the use of the materials (particularly arms, aeroplanes, vehicles, munitions, machines, and provisions) which have been transported by French forces of any origin whatsoever, or which may be transported by such forces into territories under the authority of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom or to those territories over which the British High Command exercises authority. In the event that the command of a French force shall have been assigned by General de Gaulle in agreement with the British High Command, no transfer, exchange, or re-allotment of the equipment, food, or materials of this force will be ordered by General de Gaulle without preliminary consultation and agreement with the British High Command.

3. His Majesty's Government will furnish to the French force, as soon as feasible, the complement of material needed to provide its units with equipment equivalent to that of British units of the same type.

4. The ships of the French fleet will be disposed as follows :

(a) The French force will arm and place in service all the ships for which it can furnish crews.

(b) The assignment of the ships armed and placed in service by the French force in accordance with clause (a) above will be settled by agreement between General de Gaulle and the British Admiralty, subject to revision from time to time.

(c) Ships not assigned to the French force in accordance with clause (b) above will be available to be armed and put in service under the direction of the British Admiralty.

(d) Among the other ships mentioned in clause (c) above, some may be put in service under the direct command of the British Admiralty, while certain others may be placed in service by other Allied naval forces.

(e) The crews of ships placed in service under British control will comprise, whenever possible, a complement of French officers and sailors.

(f) All ships of the French fleet remain French property.

5. The possible use of British merchant ships and their crews, in so far as it may have as object the furthering of military operations by the force of General de Gaulle, will be subject to arrangements between the General and the British Ministries concerned. Permanent contact will be established between the Ministry of Shipping and General de Gaulle for the regulation of the use of the remaining merchant ships and seamen.

6. General de Gaulle, who has supreme command of the French force, declares by these presents that he accepts the general directions of the British Command. In case of need, he will delegate, in agreement with the British High Command, the command of any given part of his force to one or more British officers of suitable rank. Nothing in this clause is to be construed as changing the statement at the end of Article I.

### III

The status of the French volunteers will be established in the following manner :

1. The volunteers will bind themselves for the duration of the war, for the purpose of fighting our common enemies.

2. They will receive salaries the basis of which will be determined separately by agreement between General de Gaulle and the Ministries concerned. The period of time during which the assessment for these salaries will be applicable will be fixed by agreement between General de Gaulle and His Majesty's Government.

3. General de Gaulle will have the right to create a civil organization to carry out the administrative services necessary for the organization of his force. The number and emoluments of the members of this organization will be fixed in consultation with the British Treasury.

Data Entered

4. The General has in like manner the right to recruit a technical and scientific personnel for the pursuit of war work. The number, the method of remuneration, and the employ of this personnel will be fixed in consultation with the Ministries of His Majesty's Government concerned.

5. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will bend all its efforts, at the conclusion of peace, to aid the French volunteers to recover all the rights, including citizenship, of which they may have been deprived as a result of their participation in the struggle against the common enemy. His Majesty's Government is disposed to provide these volunteers with special facilities for acquiring British citizenship and it will ask for all powers necessary to this end.

#### IV

1. All expenses incurred in the formation and maintenance of the French force in accordance with the present agreement will for the present be charged against the Ministries of His Majesty's Government concerned. The Ministries will have the right to undertake all necessary examinations and audits.

2. The sums disbursed under this heading will be considered as advances and entered in a separate account. All questions relative to the final settlement of such advance, as well as of sums which may have been advanced on credit by mutual agreement, will be subject to later arrangements.

#### V

The present agreement will be considered in effect as of the 1st of July, 1940.

THE PRIME MINISTER  
of the Government of  
His Majesty in the  
United Kingdom.

GENERAL DE GAULLE,  
Commander of the French Force.

All of us Frenchmen should read the text of this agreement with the greatest attention, whatever may be our ideas and our situations at the present time. It is the only document by which a great nation promises us liberation. So far as we can see now it is our one chance of ever being free again.

If General de Gaulle (and the Free French) had obtained no other result than this, they would still have earned our gratitude.

But they have achieved much more than that.

The role of the general wasn't limited to saying "I do not accept the fall of France" and to gaining the good opinion of England. He began the work of practical reconstruction. And to do this he quietly

faced the tragedy of the situation : that imprisoned France could not help at all ; that everything had to be created, administration, services, army : that he had to start from nothing.

This technician, familiar with the most costly and complicated arms, this specialist in modern warfare—warfare de luxe, which only the Great Powers are sufficiently skilled and rich enough to wage—was commissioned, almost alone, to re-form a small army, man by man, and to occupy himself with the smallest pieces of equipment, uniforms, canteens, *godillots* (army shoes). In the case of the marines, for example, there were endless difficulties for manufacturing in England, in the midst of war, that accessory unknown outside of France, the pompon for the beret—the classic red pompon. For the infantry there was a problem of the helmet which De Gaulle wanted made on the French model. Besides there were the problems of replacements and spare parts for tanks, machine guns, naval and land guns, and the furnishing of munitions of a calibre corresponding to all French arms : bullets, grenades, shells, torpedoes.

All these practical difficulties were settled with the whole-hearted support of the English authorities, despite the war and the bombardments of factories.

On August 23, 1940, two months after the armistice agreements in which the Vichy Government agreed to liquidate the French army, General de Gaulle was demonstrating that this army was being reborn. In the training camp of the French volunteers at Aldershot he reviewed the Free Forces for the first time in the presence of the English King.

George VI had insisted on coming in person to salute this troop of brave men whom nothing had discouraged. He arrived in the morning of a beautiful day, accompanied by three English officers. General de Gaulle waited in front of his small army, which was lined up near the barracks camouflaged in green and brown, between two poles flying the French and English flags. The general held himself at attention, in an outfit which would have been strange enough anywhere—long trousers of khaki clinging to his long legs, classic French military cap with golden oak leaves, white gloves. As soon as the king stepped to the ground the 'aux champs' sounded through the detachment of the 'Legion Etrangère' followed by 'la générale.' The commanding officer of the Legionnaires, Colonel V., a small man with a tanned face, seamed, and covered with scars as large as the decorations on his chest, saluted the king with his sword. The king then passed slowly before the motionless men, in an absolute silence broken only by a single plane marked with the French cockade. All this was touching in its small proportions, its extreme good will, its dauntless hope in the struggle against defeat.

The king left the troops for a few minutes to visit the mess halls, the infirmary, and the trucks, and then came back to stand at the centre of the parade ground.

Then the French miracle came to pass once more, the miracle of French courage. Legionnaires, artillerymen, Senegalese 'Tirailleurs,'

marines in white gaiters, the tank corps in black berets, dark blue uniformed 'Chasseurs Alpins' recently returned from Norway—all these marched in review. They were in small detachments and without arms, but the one and only Tricolour floated above the column, and to see it floating there despite the ruin of the nation was almost an historical event. The famous old French marches resounded : the 'Téméraire,' the 'March of the 11th Battalion of Chasseurs,' the 'Boudin,' the 'Salute to the Emperor.' One could feel the emotion of the men, tense, pale, with the consciousness of their duty and the desire to do it well. One felt the emotion of the king, who had seen a splendid army march to the same airs two years previously at Versailles on the occasion of his visit to France. One sensed, finally, the feelings of General de Gaulle, the feelings of a great leader before this handful of brave children, before this army that was being reborn, wonderful as a symbolic force but as a reality so poor, so small, so far still from the instrument of victory that he had dreamed of for so many months and that he would have known so well how to lead.

The birth of the De Gaulle movement aroused deep emotion and interest from June, 1940, on, among Frenchmen and friends of France throughout the world. But it was generally considered that De Gaulle's attempt to resuscitate his country was bound up with the fate of England itself. Inside and outside France people reserved judgment pending the outcome of a German attack on England.

Little by little, however, as the failure of Germany to invade England became evident, those who were waiting gained faith in the movement. In France itself, even in the occupied regions, the name of De Gaulle began to go the rounds despite the venomous measures taken by German propaganda to misrepresent and suppress it.

Some Breton fishermen who came to England with their families to join the Free French forces in October, 1940, had a story to tell :

"None of us had ever heard of the general before. But one day we heard, in the French language broadcast over the German radio, that the Vichy Government had just passed a death sentence on him. Then we said : 'That's the man we're looking for. If the Germans insult him he must be all right.' So we secretly crossed the Channel to join him."

Truly, in spite of all the barriers that the enemy has so desperately tried to erect between the French dominated by him in France and the Free French abroad, there is no possibility of antagonism between them. They have the same sorrows, the same enemy, the same hopes.

Among the Free French forces there are men of all the provinces, all the religions, all the diverse shades of opinion that exist in France. And that's how it should be. You can hear the accent of Lorraine one minute and of Provence the next, the Breton alongside the Basque. Freethinkers rub shoulders with Catholics, Jews with Protestants. Each man keeps his own political ideas without anyone's bothering

about whether he is a socialist or a royalist, a republican, a communist, a Bonapartist. The Free French came together to deliver France, not to divide her among themselves. They feel that their party names are only first names, as Paul Déroulède said as early as 1871 and that French is their common surname. They feel themselves brothers. For them nothing counts except the chance to drive the enemy from France, destroy his might, and render him incapable of a new aggression.

The men of the Free French forces have their own ideas on the subject of responsibility for the French disaster. But they don't talk about it very much. They haven't the slightest desire to get embroiled in the post-mortems and quarrels in which the Germans are determined to involve occupied France. The Free French know that mistakes were made by many men—soldiers as well as civilians, politicians, technicians, diplomats, bankers, journalists, and the simple voters too. They do not forget that the whole country nursed along certain weaknesses through its natural tendency toward optimism and its refusal to believe in the evil intentions of Germany and Italy. They admit freely that defeatism and treason both played a part in the disaster. But they have put off until after the victory and their return to France the time for judging all such questions. For the time being they refuse to be lured after any prey but the Germans.

They follow General de Gaulle for the most simple and clear reasons in the world :

The general assumed full responsibility when he refused to accept the armistice agreements and launched his appeals for resistance.

He has the prestige of having been the first to understand the errors of our military policy and having pointed them out. When the time came he fought bravely to redeem them. Such facts are essential for the Frenchmen of to-day, whose main grievance is that they feel they were misled by civilian and military leaders who were themselves outwitted by circumstances and were short-sighted on questions of modern warfare. The defeated French feel that they have been insufficiently guarded, insufficiently protected, in short, to put it bluntly, insufficiently loved. Consequently to gather around a leader who tried earlier to save them from catastrophe is an act that makes sense to them.

The Frenchman always remains the same magnificent fighter ; but he is a fighter who thinks, not a robot. He gives freely of himself when he believes it his duty to give. He never refuses any sacrifice no matter how great, even to the sacrifice of his life if he understands that the sacrifice is necessary and that his leaders have done their duty as well as he is expected to do his. And their duty is to render his sacrifice meaningful.

But if our soldier becomes convinced that preparations for the battle have not been properly made, that he is being sent to his death when he knows his material equipment is not equal to the enemy's, then he feels deceived, betrayed—that is the word he uses most often—

and he lies down on his job in the same measure that he considers his leaders have lain down on theirs. There are many proofs that our men made such a distinction during the recent war. The troops of our light mechanized divisions, for instance, fought superbly everywhere because they judged that they were properly armed. At the same time the infantry showed signs of indifference in certain cases because the struggle was too one-sided. The French soldiers with their sure instinct had guessed more quickly than their leaders the impossibility of linear defence against the German armoured forces. They realized the necessity for mobile action in accordance with new concepts of strategy. Since these concepts were not forthcoming our army little by little went to pieces.

The French soldier needs to believe in order to act and to understand in order to believe. Hold it against him if you like. That's the way he is. I understand perfectly that there are officers and civilian leaders who call this sceptical good will of the French bad temper, who consider the critical attitude of the men mere lack of discipline and are determined to break it. Those are the leaders with little talent for command, the leaders who detest high-spirited people and prefer them to be like beasts of burden, which are easier to lead.

The reactionary procedures that the Vichy Government has adopted in France arise in part from the spite of military and civil leaders who think they have not been followed as they should have been. But what petty spite !

Napoleon, who knew his Frenchmen exceedingly well, never let himself be content with preparing for a battle with all the genius at his command and bringing up to the appointed place means of fire and effective forces superior to those of the enemy. He also made every effort to let his soldiers know the reasons why these measures would lead them to victory. The men, made aware of the intelligent effort expended to make their success possible, gave themselves without stint. Such methods are necessary if you expect to arouse the enthusiasm of Frenchmen. That is how their deep democratic instinct manages to submit to military discipline. Everything depends on what idea the soldier, the active performer, gets of the care the leader has for him. He will willingly undertake desperate actions implying certain death—but only when he has the assurance that everyone from top to bottom has done his complete duty. The soldiers of 1940 had no such assurance.

The Frenchmen of the Free Forces can say to themselves, 'Oui; leader foresaw the catastrophe. He bore his full share of responsibility before the war and during the war, and since the armistice he's had the guts to say : "I'm going on."'

The general's whole life, all his ideas and his actions singled him out to be the reorganizer of French military power in the face of a mechanized Germany which temporarily subdued France.

That is how General de Gaulle, who arrived in England on June 17 completely alone, was able to leave England early in September, 1940,

with a real army—including infantry, tanks, big guns, planes, all carried in French war and merchant ships—in order to oppose the penetration of Germany and Italy into our colonial empire.

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## CHAPTER X

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## FREE FRANCE IN AFRICA

THE GENERAL BELIEVES, and in this he is in agreement with Mr. Winston Churchill, that in order to deliver France it is imperative above all to defend her colonial empire. The Germans and the Italians, with an opposite aim, are of the same opinion. They know that they cannot win the war as long as they do not hold Africa, Asia Minor, and Asia, in other words, reserves of raw materials and access to the highways of the world.

The French colonial empire covers 7,500,000 square miles spread over four continents and inhabited by more than 65,000,000 men. It overlaps the British Empire, notably in Africa and along the coasts of the Mediterranean, in such fashion that it formed with it, when France was fighting at the side of England, a contiguous whole. But since the fall of France it provides a series of bases for eventual attack against the British Empire. That's why it is of immense interest to Germany. It is true that Hitler when he formulated the terms of the armistice did not reveal his plans for seizing the French empire. No mention of it is made in the official text signed by the French Government. Hitler felt so sure of the collapse of England and of a swift victory that he probably thought it would be time enough to speak of the French colonies when dictating the peace treaty. But since the Germans have realized that the war would be a long one, all their secret actions have tended toward the gradual penetration of the French possessions overseas. This penetration represents for Hitler his best opportunity of getting out of Europe and reaching the English—and American—bases and lines of communication.

From the time when he made his first appeals General de Gaulle gave particular attention to our overseas possessions.

Frenchmen [he said in a speech at the beginning of July, 1940], I want to speak to-day about our empire. The execution of the abominable armistices concluded in June puts us in a good way to lose it.

Those detestable armistices might in a pinch have had some show of justification if they had been limited to a military convention restricted to continental France.

But they were completely unjustifiable and inexcusable so far as the empire was concerned. The empire was still intact. The enemy hadn't even tried to attack it. Now the armistices make

the empire a prey of the enemy. Our colonies are to be disarmed. Strategic positions are to be evacuated. German and Italian commissions are to be installed to control whatever they please. After which, without any difficulty for them, without any honour for us, our enemies have only to stretch out their hands to grab lands given to France by our explorers, our soldiers, our missionaries, and our colonists.

I must add that the native populations have remained faithful to France, confident in her, respectful to her. They look with scorn on the surrender of the empire without a fight.

Finally what will be the economic position of our unhappy colonies under the regime set up by the armistice agreements? Cut off from the sea by the blockade, where will they get provisions? Where will they export what they produce? They are threatened with frightful disorder and terrible poverty. How can those in charge of administration maintain their authority amid such disorder and poverty?

High commissioners, governors general, governors, administrators, residents of our colonies and protectorates, your duty toward France, your duty toward your colonies, your duty toward those whose interests, honour, and lives depend on you, lies in refusing to carry out the terms of the abominable armistices. You are the regents of French sovereignty which is now in escheat. Some of you have already joined me to continue the war beside our allies. Those will get help. But I appeal to the others. If I have to I shall appeal over their heads to the native populations.

Frenchmen of the new France, overseas France, you free men, you young men, you brave men, show yourselves worthy of the new, free, young, and brave France which will arise after the victory.

This appeal which little by little was to liberate a third of the French empire was first heard in the French colonies in India. Those small possessions that France had retained from the time when she owned all of India were the first to align themselves with Free France. The famous old ports of Pondicherry, Madras, Chandernagore, Mahé, and Karikal informed the general that they had refused the armistice and were continuing the war on the side of the Free French and the English. Thus the general acquired a foothold on French territory again and began the reconquest of his country by the good will of these distant possessions which were unknown to him.

When the territories of Chad joined Free France in the month of August, 1940, to be followed by Cameroons and Gabon, the general hailed the event in these terms :

The enemy thought to have done with France by imposing an abominable armistice. The enemy was fooled. Others imagined that France definitely would fight no more. These gentlemen have committed an error.

France has been temporarily struck down by a form of warfare for which she was not prepared. In its distress our country doubted itself. She doubted her allies. Certain Frenchmen, blinded by despair, managed to forget two thousand years of history and persuade themselves that the road to salvation lay in submission to Hitler and Mussolini.

How could they? France is France. She has within her a secret strength that has always astounded the world and has not yet ceased to astound it. Though crushed, humiliated, and surrendered, France is beginning to climb up the slopes of the abyss.

The Frenchmen of Chad have just given proof of it. Spontaneously these upright, sane, brave men have taken up their arms and are going into battle. I have reason to believe that others will follow their example.

I have reason to say that a fighting France is in process of reformation. Her forces are increasing. I have reason to believe that there is still honour and glory for France. I have reason to assure you that since she remains present in the war France will be present at the victory.

To-day, August 27, 1940, the three hundred and sixtieth day of the World War, I bestow the order of the Empire on the territory of Chad on the following grounds:

Under the inspiration of its leaders, Governor Eboué and Colonel Marchand, military commandant of the territory, Chad has demonstrated that it has remained first and foremost a land of valiant Frenchmen.

Despite an unusually dangerous military and economic situation, Chad has refused to subscribe to a shameful surrender and has resolved to pursue the war to its victorious conclusion. By its admirable resolution it has shown the road of duty and given the signal of rehabilitation to the whole French empire.

On August 29 De Gaulle was able to renounce that Cameroons had followed the example of Chad.

On August 26 [he said] the territory of Chad joined the Free French forces, under the impetus given by its governor and its military commandment. On the twenty-seventh of August Cameroons, responding to a great impulse to faith, order, and discipline, spontaneously placed itself under the direction of my representatives. These men have assumed direct charge of the administration of the French mandate and the command of the troops.

Yesterday, August 28, at Brazzaville, capital of French Equatorial Africa, my representative took over the civil and military powers. He was acclaimed by the whole population and obeyed by all troops.

Thus under the menace of the German and Italian enemies and  
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placed by the abominable armistice in a hopeless economic situation the whole body of our colonies in French Equatorial Africa has re-entered the war. This vast and valiant section of French lands has resolved to defend itself—and it will be defended. I am certain that other territories will take the same road. The French empire is rising to make war.

In this total world war, in this war in which every move counts, the French empire constitutes a prime nucleus of forces. Because of its geographical and strategic positions, because of its teeming population, because of the vast resources of the colonies, France still holds high trumps in this game she is playing for her very life.

The crime of the armistice lies in the fact that the French ministers surrendered as though France had no colonial empire.

The crime of the armistice lies in the fact that they misconceived the enormous forces that we still had intact in the empire. The crime of the armistice lies in the fact that they disarmed the empire in order to leave it at the mercy of the enemy.

Two days ago the Italian press and radio made the following statement, speaking of French Tunisia :

"France has admitted defeat and signed an armistice. France shall be taught a lesson. There are several questions which are not open to debate. One of them is Tunisia, which shall be entirely and unreservedly annexed to the Roman Empire."

Thus spoke the Italian enemy. Very well, Free France wants no part of this so-called armistice. For her it is null and void. The so-called armistice was concluded by unworthy leaders whom Free France does not recognize. The war will go on between France and her enemies. The war for the French empire will go on. We shall continue passive resistance and one day take up active resistance on the French mainland and eventually carry the war to enemy territory.

I call on every French land to fulfil its duty in national defence. I call the French army, navy, and air force to arms. There is plenty of glory to win for our flags. I summon to the war for honour and freedom all Frenchmen wherever they may be. Each Frenchman must by all the means in his power, be they active or passive, bend every effort to destroy the enemy. We shall not perish. We shall win the war.

France—new France—great France—forward !

There was solid reality behind these words. The Germans were and still are cut off from the French colonial empire by the sea, and they are stopped on the sea by the English fleet.

The Germans were perfectly well aware that it was too dangerous to gain sovereignty over the empire by decree, whether issued from Paris or Vichy. The risk was that in order to avoid German domination the entire French colonial empire by common consent might go

over to the Free French and with them enter the war at the side of England.

Consequently Hitler had to resign himself to stalling. He was determined to use the Vichy Government and through it to secretly penetrate into the empire under cover of the French administration itself, pretending all the while to respect French sovereignty. So he proceeded by the dispatch of 'archæological missions,' 'armistice commissions,' and technicians, as at Dakar and Casablanca, or by sending German planes 'bound for further destinations,' as he did with the German transport planes which landed in Syria 'on their way to Iraq.' At the same time he coerced the Vichy Government into dismissing governors or other French colonial officials who were suspected of patriotic feelings.

However dangerous it may be for France, this method of gradual penetration did put Hitler in 1940 and '41, at least to a certain extent and for a certain time, in the position of having to ask something of the Vichy Government. For that reason it put a weapon in the hands of this Government—probably its only weapon. If the French colonial empire had been from the start accessible to the Germans Hitler would probably not have allowed even the semblance of a French Government to remain in existence after the armistice.

It can be said that it is the presence of the British fleet between the Germans and the French colonial empire that permits the Vichy Government to be. One might describe Marshal Pétain as holding the empire 'in his beak,' as the raven in the fable held his piece of cheese. Fox Hitler has to use patience, trickery, and polite subterfuges to accomplish his end.

England's mastery of the seas helps the Vichy Government ; it also gives the Free French freedom of action. It enables them to get a foothold on certain French colonial territories and to use them as bases for the reconquest of their native land.

Thus, a very subtle game is being played. The Germans are striving to impose on Vichy measures that will have the appearance of legality but that will let the empire fall into their hands before the Free French and England have had time to make real headway.

Vichy, while it gives in to the conqueror, while it shows itself hostile to England and bitterly opposed to the Free French, is struggling to gain time and to keep control of its only asset, the French colonies. In the event of a British victory (the secret hope, no doubt, of those members of the Vichy Government who have not personally sold out to Germany) the Vichy ministers could boast of having kept the empire free of German occupation. In the event of a German victory the Vichy Government, while accepting German superiority, could try to negotiate the empire against some concessions from Hitler. In short Vichy is playing a dual game.

The Free French for their part are playing but a single game—the defeat of Germany.

That is the significance of General de Gaulle's journey to Africa.

On October 9, after the failure of his attempt to land at Dakar,<sup>1</sup> the general reached French Cameroons. The port of Duala and the city of Brazzaville on the Congo River gave him an enthusiastic welcome.

By that date the colonies which had joined the Free French forces covered nearly 2,000,000 square miles, or more than four and a half times the area of France. Their population totalled more than 6,000,000. They included :

In Africa : Chad, French Equatorial Africa, and Cameroons ; Gabon was to join them later.

In Asia : the French establishments of India.

In Oceania : New Caledonia, the French establishments in the Pacific, and the New Hebrides (in condominium with Great Britain).

These colonial possessions of the Free French are even more valuable because of their strategic positions and their natural resources than because of their size.

The territory of Chad protects the flank of the English and Free French fighting in Libya and the Sudan. The cities of Duala, Pointe Noire, and Brazzaville will never become German bases. For lines of communication between England or America and Egypt and the Near East our Allies can go through—or fly over—Chad, a shorter route than around the Cape.

From the standpoint of production the wood from Gabon, gold from Ubangi, coffee, oil, and peanuts from Cameroons help the Free French pay their share of the costs of the war.

In Asia the French establishments of India continue their production of oleaginous grains and rare spices. From Polynesia, New Caledonia comes to our aid with its precious metals. The Hebrides, the Marquesas, Tuamotu, and the Society Islands help guard the lanes of the Pacific. These bases, of course, will be more and more valuable if the war spreads to the Far East.

The Germans are so anxious about this situation that they are working relentlessly to force the Vichy Government to reconquer, with the French fleet and French troops, the colonies that went over to General de Gaulle. They have already obliged Vichy to defend against the Free French such parts of the empire as General de Gaulle has endeavoured to liberate.

The natives of French Equatorial Africa have felt in their own way the meaning of the arrival of this French soldier who does not accept defeat. A little legend about him is already being circulated from one Negro village to another :

De Gaulle was a corporal in the French army, dead and buried

<sup>1</sup> One can see that wherever possible in this book I have published the texts of documents. The most important documents for the Dakar expedition, which was made up of Free French and English, are military secrets. They cannot be published. Without these documents it is impossible to write an accurate account of this incident. I have therefore deliberately set it aside for the moment. I have for the same reason set aside the story of the Syrian campaign of 1941.

long ago. One day in his grave he heard that Paris had been taken by another corporal, a Boche called Hitler. Then he leaped from his tomb in fury and shouted : "I'm a general now and I'll show you something!"

Indeed the existence of De Gaulle meant more to these coloured citizens of France than any legend can tell : it meant protection against the iron fist of Germany. The harshness of the regime imposed by the Germany of William II on the natives, especially on those that inhabited Cameroons, had been forgotten by no one in Africa. The beatings, executions, and insults are remembered. But they know also that this harshness was nothing in comparison with the methods now in favour with the Nazis, who have decided to exploit 'the inferior races.' In contrast the black 'Tirailleurs' have filled all of French Africa with recitals and descriptions of liberal France, where they were treated like the whites. The native peoples, who have faith in these testimonials, do not want to renounce this France which lived up to the tradition affirmed and which General de Gaulle carries on.

This loyalty of African natives to France after her defeat follows the tradition illustrated by one of the most distinguished black leaders, M. Eboué, the governor of Chad. As early as the armistice this administrator decided not to surrender his colony to German influence. As soon as René Plevé, civil envoy of General de Gaulle in Africa, made contact with him in September, 1940, Eboué aligned himself with the Free French and carried along his entire colony, in other words the very core of Africa.

The Belgians, too, stress the importance of Governor Eboué's decision. It is because the Free French hold Chad and Cameroons and the right bank of the lower Congo that the Belgian Congo can work in security, exporting gold, copper, and katanga wood to the allied countries.

Chad, finally, is a country of warriors and a base of military action. Those who are familiar with the Tibesti desert, a difficult and still mysterious area, can use it to make rapid advances and equally sudden retreats. Chad menaces Italian Libya and eventually permits the Free French to lend a helping hand to their supporters on the coast of French North Africa ; it covers the Sudan, the southern base of Egypt, from which the English drove the Italians out of Abyssinia. In conclusion, if fate willed that the Allies should lose Egypt—which seems very improbable now—Chad would become one of the bases of the new line of defence in Central Africa. Thanks to the control over Chad, the Africa of De Gaulle is stable throughout its entire area of some twelve hundred miles from the borders of Egypt to the coast of the Atlantic. There the flourishing ports of Duala, Pointe Noire, and Brazzaville export the primary products of their rich back country to the allied nations and receive machines and materials of all sorts necessary for the development of the country and for the armies being formed.

Thus the Free French are rendering a great service to the Allies

in consolidating their colonial positions in Africa and Asia. Thus they have now acquired a territory of their own and resources which enable them to provide for their war defence.

As soon as he reached Free French Africa De Gaulle weighed carefully the three important tasks that lay ahead of him :

He had to put the colonial territories which had joined him in a state of defence against Germany and Italy. He had to insure order and normal life in the colonies. He had especially to bolster up their economy, which had been seriously damaged by the collapse of continental France. These tasks could only be carried out in conjunction with a co-ordinated plan for the conduct of the Free French forces in the war.

Obviously the solution of these urgent problems could not wait. Some sort of wartime bodies had to start functioning immediately. To meet the need General de Gaulle set up the Council for Empire Defence and a Commissariat for Free French Africa. The establishment of the Council for Empire Defence was announced on October 24, 1940, in the following manifesto :

France is passing through the most terrible crisis in its history. Her frontiers, her empire, her independence, and even her very soul are threatened with destruction.

Giving way to inexcusable panic our second-hand leaders accepted the domination of the enemy. However, innumerable signs indicate that the people and the empire do not accept this horrible slavery. Millions of Frenchmen and French subjects have determined to continue the war until victory is won. Millions and millions of others are only awaiting leaders worthy of the name.

Now properly speaking there is no French Government in existence. In fact the organization located at Vichy which abrogates to itself the name of French Government is unconstitutional and under submission to the invader. Considering its condition of servitude this organization is not and cannot be other than an instrument used by the enemies of France against the honour and the best interests of the country. A new power must assume the responsibility for the direction of French efforts in the war. Events have imposed this sacred duty on me. I shall not prove myself lacking.

I shall exercise my powers in the name of France and solely to defend her. I give my solemn pledge to render an accounting for my acts to the representatives of the French people whenever it may prove possible freely to choose them.

To help me carry out my duties I have appointed as of to-day a Council for Empire Defence. This council, which is composed of men who are already exercising authority over French territories or who symbolize the highest intellectual and moral values of the nation, represents the nation and the empire embattled for their very existence.

I summon to war, and that means to combat and sacrifice, all men and women of French lands which have joined me. In close union with our allies, who have proclaimed their wish to contribute to the restoration of the independence and greatness of France, it is our part to defend against the enemy or his satellites that part of the national patrimony that we still hold. We must attack the enemy wherever that may be possible. We must throw into the struggle all our resources—military, economic, and moral—maintain public order and bring about a reign of justice.

We shall accomplish this great task for France in full consciousness of doing our duty and in the conviction that we shall conquer.

This manifesto was followed by the publication of Order Number I. whose main articles are printed below :

**ARTICLE 1.** Since it has been impossible to set up a French government and a body representative of the French people legitimate and independent of the enemy, public functions in all parts of the empire freed from enemy control shall be exercised—on the basis of French legislation in existence previous to the twenty-third of June, 1940—under the following conditions :

**ARTICLE 2.** There has been created a Council for Empire Defence whose mission is to maintain loyalty to France, guard the external and internal security, direct the economic activity, and further the moral unity of the populations of French colonial territories.

This council will have charge of the conduct of the war in all domains, with a view to the liberation of the nation. It will treat with foreign powers on all questions relative to the defence of French possessions and French interests.

**ARTICLE 6.** The seat of the Council for Defence will be located wherever suitable for the exercise of its functions in directing the war under the best conditions.

Order Number II designated the members of the Council for Empire Defence. They were :

General Catroux, Honorary Governor General of Indo-China.  
Vice-Admiral Muselier, Commander-in-Chief of the Free French naval and air forces.

General de Larminat, Governor General of French Equatorial Africa.

Governor Eboué of Chad.

Governor Sautot, High Commissioner of the French establishments of the Pacific.

General Sice of the Medical Corps.

Professor René Cassin, professor in the Faculty of Law in Paris, Honorary President of the Federal Union of War Veterans.

Reverend Father d'Argenlieu.

Colonel Leclerc, Commissioner of France in the Cameroons.

The declarations of the general that announced the re-establishment of French sovereignty, free and on the scale of empire, were to have a powerful effect on occupied and unoccupied France. They proved that the Free French were active and that they were ceaselessly working for all French people's deliverance. Two days previously, on October 22, in London, a great English voice also addressed words to occupied and unoccupied France—words that pledged England for the future—words that could awaken France :

Frenchmen, for more than thirty years in peace and war I have marched with you and I am marching still along the same road. To-night I speak to you at your firesides, wherever you may be or whatever your fortunes are. I repeat that prayer which appears round the Louis d'or, "God protect France."

Here at home in England under the fire of the Boche we do not forget the ties and links that unite us to France, and we are persevering steadfastly and in good heart in the cause of European freedom and fair dealing for the common people of all countries for which with you we drew the sword.

When good people get into trouble because they are attacked and heavily smitten by the vile and wicked they must be very careful not to get at loggerheads with one another.

The common enemy is always trying to bring this about, and, of course, in bad luck a lot of things happen which play into the enemy's hands. We must just make the best of things as they come along.

Here in London, which Herr Hitler says he will reduce to ashes and which his aeroplanes are now bombarding, our people are bearing up unflinchingly. Our air force has more than held its own. We are waiting for the long-promised invasion. So are the fishes.

But, of course, this for us is only the beginning. Now in 1940 we have in spite of occasional losses, as ever, command of the seas. In 1941, we shall have command of the air. Remember what that means.

Herr Hitler, with his tanks and other mechanical weapons and also by fifth-column intrigue with traitors, has managed to subjugate for the time being most of the finest races in Europe, and his little Italian accomplice is trotting along hopefully and hungrily, but rather wearily and very timidly, at his side.

They both wished to carve up France and her empire as if it were a fowl. To one a leg, to another a wing, or again a portion of the breast. Not only the French empire would be devoured by these two ugly customers, but Alsace-Lorraine would go once again under the German yoke, and Nice, Savoy, and Corsica—Napoleon's Corsica—would be torn from the fair realm of France.

But Herr Hitler is not thinking only of stealing other people's territory or flinging goblets of them to his little dog. I tell you truly what you must believe : this evil man, this monstrous

abortion of hatred and deceit, is resolved on nothing less than the complete wiping out of the French nation and the disintegration of its whole life and future.

The British Prime Minister ended by assuring the French of his loyalty—a loyalty of which he has not ceased to give proofs by his actions.

Thus the head of the English Government and the head of the Free French, one from London and the other from Brazzaville, gave the captive French in turn reasons for confidence. We were nearing November 11, 1940. How would the conquered peoples of France spend this first anniversary of our lost victory, of our vanished greatness? The German authorities naturally forbade any demonstration of respect for the victors of 1918; denied permission to honour their monuments, or even to gather at the tombs.

General de Gaulle took part in the celebrations held by the Free French and the native populations. Leaving the French city of Brazzaville to visit our friends in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, he spoke from the powerful radio station of that city to the natives of Africa and to the whole world when he addressed the spirit of Marshal Foch, victor of 1918:

Marshal Foch [he said], your body lies in the Invalides, but your spirit still marches with the spirits of all French soldiers. To-day on the eleventh of November I come respectfully to give you my ~~last~~ as a French soldier.

Marshal Foch, you won the war because your will was strong to win it. Know that those who were our leaders yesterday forswore victory and ordered us to submit to the enemy.

Marshal Foch, your loyalty and your genius won for you—and for us—the honour of your choice as commander of all the armies of all the peoples allied with France. What must be your sorrow to learn that those who were our leaders ordered us to betray our allies in full battle.

Marshal Foch, you always taught us and proved by your example that we had no right to surrender so long as we had the means to fight on. All the peoples whose national territory fell into the hands of the enemy had the courage to understand that: the Poles, the Czechoslovakians, the Belgians, the Dutch, the Norwegians, the people of Luxemburg. I must tell you that those who were our leaders surrendered the sword of France while France still had an empire of 60,000,000 souls, guarded by 500,000 soldiers, a formidable air force, a magnificent fleet, and powerful and determined allies.

Marshal Foch, you who never ceased to face the enemy in the north, you must learn that those who were our leaders have now ordered the troops to turn south in the same direction as the enemy to overcome Frenchmen who wish to fight for France.

Marshal Foch, it was on one November 11 that you placed the crown of victory on the forehead of the nation. On this eleventh of November those who were our leaders have just given an oath of co-operation to the enemy. But I haven't come to report to you only infamous things. For there are soldiers, there are Frenchmen who do not subscribe to this oath. There are Frenchmen, there are soldiers who are determined to wipe it out.

We Free French soldiers are these Frenchmen, these soldiers. Since those who were our leaders have through panic or despair turned their backs on their duty we have determined, in shame and grief, to turn our backs on them. We have decided too, Marshal, Immortal Leader, to follow your example and obey your spirit.

We shall follow your example. We shall carry out your orders. We refuse to throw down our arms. We shall continue to fight whenever and wherever we can. We shall emerge little by little from the abyss of disaster.

We are tearing the French colonial empire piece by piece from the hands of those who collaborate with the enemy, in order to save it for France and find in it means of continuing the fight. We have already brought back into the war Chad, Cameroons, Ubangi, the Congo, our Pacific colonies, and no later than yesterday Gabon. It is because we are determined to follow your example and carry out faithfully your orders, united as you would wish that Frenchmen should be with the allies whom you commanded.

We shall so act that the nation may have its share in the victory. We shall give her back her honour, her greatness, her happiness.

Marshal, we shall do simply and faithfully what you commanded. We shall do our duty.

The general wanted to organize the economic life of the six million inhabitants of Free French Africa. He also wanted to give them an army. A few months after his visit, the cargoes of Free France could be seen in the ports. In Brazzaville a miniature of St. Cyr and a school for artillery were instructing the leaders of the black troops for whom training camps were scattered throughout the country. To-day, in September, 1941, the first to be promoted from these schools—a hundred second-lieutenants—have already been incorporated in the army.

A powerful radio station almost completed permits the Free French to speak to the entire world and particularly to occupied and unoccupied France. New camps of huts are arising everywhere, the materials supplied by the inexhaustible equatorial forest. Everywhere the camps of the black volunteers are distinguished by their villages of conical huts where the 'Tirailleurs' live with their wives and children. The Senegalese with their red 'Chechia' and their faces tattooed in many different patterns according to the tribes to

which they belong—Batiki, Basundi, Madoumi—mix with the soldiers of the Foreign Legion in their white uniforms and the sailors from the boats anchored off Duala.

French volunteers from France and the empire are directing the sudden awakening of this colonial town that has become the capital of an empire and, even more important, the temporary refuge of a great country, conquered but unbeaten.

Governor Eboué has well deserved the new post of governor of all Free French Equatorial Africa which General de Gaulle has bestowed upon him.

On November 25, 1940, General de Gaulle was back in London. He felt with satisfaction the growing interest that the entire Anglo-Saxon world was taking in the defence of French Africa.

The fate of the French colonial empire is naturally important to the Free French and to the English since their war aims are bound up together. But it is of very great importance also to the Americans. No citizen of the New World unless he is a Nazi can view without deep concern the prospect of the installation of the Germans on the West Coast of Africa at the narrowest point of the Atlantic Ocean.

"You see," General de Gaulle said to me recently, "Hitler is a man of imagination. He is a man who has rediscovered that the earth is round. He knows that starting from Germany he will find himself back in Germany if he pushes his way far enough. He knows perfectly well that the war he has unleashed is a world war and that it can end only in a total victory for him or for us."

"He also knows that beyond England it is the United States which holds the balance of power, that it forms the weight which will tip the scales one way or the other."

"Obviously Hitler hopes to beat England before the United States gets its industrial and military programme fully under way. For that reason he is making every effort to cut the Empire's lines of communication by chasing England from the Mediterranean, that is, from her bases in Gibraltar and Egypt. But when he attacks Africa to threaten the life of England, Hitler also threatens the life of the United States."

"When Hitler sends German or Italian troops into Libya the objective is the Suez Canal. But what assurance have you that other Axis troops will not enter Tunisia, Algeria, or Morocco? They can reach those countries from Libya, they can reach them from Spain or Portugal. In any event the Germans and Italians could, step by step, reach the region of Dakar. They could even one day send the French fleet against our ports of Free French Equatorial Africa in an attempt to force them to co-operate with Germany."

"At present there are German and Italian armistice commissions—German and Italian 'technicians'—at Dakar as well as at Casablanca. These visitors engage in both military and economic affairs. Did you notice that the armistice carries a clause authorizing the conquerors to use all the organizations of French maritime and air lines connecting

Dakar, Natal, and other cities in South America? The day when 'Franco-German companies' will administer these transport lines the German penetration of Africa will be an accomplished fact and German penetration into South America will be very near to becoming a reality. Remember that the distance from Dakar to Natal is less than half the distance from Natal to the southern coast of the United States."

"From Dakar," the general went on, "Hitler could by aeroplanes and submarines cut the communications of the United States—and those of England, of course—with South America, the Cape, and the whole of the Orient. He could penetrate into Brazil by propaganda and even by sheer force.

"In short if Hitler gets a foothold on the west coast of Africa the United States will lose naval control of South America. If the United States lost control of South America it would be in great danger of losing mastery of the Panama Canal, its shortest means of transferring its fleet from the Atlantic to the Pacific and vice versa. From the moment that the United States loses its freedom to do that, its system of defence is dangerously threatened. Hitler's system of offence eventually joined to that of Japan would gain an almost decisive advantage. Consequently the United States is bound to join the English for the defence of either French Africa or English Africa against the Germans and the Italians. This war is a struggle for strategic bases, and every base conquered by Hitler would be turned immediately against England and against the United States. . . . Hitler is not interested any more in signing peace treaties with the peoples he conquers. He is determined on unconditional submission. He wants to transform each conquered land and city into an instrument for further victories. It's the policy of the avalanche. Every nation and base that is uprooted and broken must be pushed down the slope to help uproot and break the rest of the world."

I watched De Gaulle while he stopped to get his own ideas in order. You wouldn't think, to look at him, that he was outlining so black a prospect. You felt him at ease before the battle, like a surgeon before an open incision.

"It can't be repeated too often," he went on, "that the Germans plan to dominate the world. The plan has almost been carried out so far as Europe is concerned. There the nations attacked in isolation one after the other have been conquered or neutralized with the exception of England and Russia.

"Hitler knows perfectly that in order to beat England he must strike her in her empire, and his plans for 1941 and 1942 call for the extension of the European war to the whole world.

"The attack of the Germans in Libya, in the direction of Suez, the attempts to penetrate the region around Dakar, and even a war against Russia, coincide with plans for a Japanese thrust toward the South Pacific, French Indo-China, and Singapore. If these three attacks should succeed, the Germans and their Italian and Japanese allies would have cut to pieces the chain of Anglo-Saxon and French

positions in the world. They would isolate in Asia a bloc of bases comprising China, India, Australia, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies, which are powerless to resist by themselves for very long. By occupying the Suez Canal they would isolate the French possessions in Africa, Asia Minor, Turkey, and Russia. And they would for all practical purposes cut communications between North and South America by occupying Dakar and Casablanca.

"Finally, it is obvious that the Battle of the Atlantic would tend to cut the communications between England and the United States."

Thus spoke General de Gaulle. A number of people, the author of this book among them, have for years been calling attention to this German plan in whole or in part. It existed in 1936 under the guise of the Anti-Comintern Pact. It has existed almost in complete form in the files of the German High Command ever since the war of 1914. Hitler found it when he came to power in 1933. He has done nothing but dress it up and provide the necessary political and diplomatic camouflage.

The democracies governed by untrained popular masses and by rather short-sighted business men and politicians have been incapable of comprehending the fantastic breadth of view and the cynical ambition of the group of ruthless men who govern totalitarian Germany. Neither France nor England was willing to arouse itself when Hitler invaded the Rhineland in 1936, or in 1937 at the time of the *Anchluss* with Austria, or in 1938 over the invasion of Czechoslovakia. More recently American opinion has understood much too late the importance of the attempt of General de Gaulle and the English to seize Dakar.

At the present writing, in September, 1941, the United States has recognized that Germany is waging three battles : the Battle of the Atlantic against the British Isles and their supply lines, the Battle of Africa aimed at Dakar and the Suez, and the Battle of Asia—via Russia and Japan—aimed at Singapore and the mastery of the Pacific. The United States has recognized that these three battles concern its own safety. It has recognized that in these three battles the interests of the English and the Free French coincide with those of the United States.

The fact that America has become aware of this state of affairs makes victory certain if the citizens of the United States do not underestimate the time factor.

Thus our empire in Africa holds the attention of our Anglo-Saxon allies and gives them a direct interest in the safety of the French colonies in spite of the defeat we suffered in continental France. This keeps our cause alive in the hearts of our friends and at the same time forces the respect of our enemies. It is in French Africa that the coalition of the Allies and their American sympathizers takes on its full meaning ; it is there that the war becomes in the full sense of the term a world war.

The part to be played by French Africa has only just begun. Hitler, as aware as we are of the importance of the Dark Continent, searches feverishly for the means of sending his troops there in spite of the English fleet. He is working toward opening a passage through Spain and Gibraltar, passing through Libya and at the same time forcing the Dardanelles or Russia to reach the Near East and Suez.

In this Battle of the Mediterranean and Asia Minor, French Morocco is close to Gibraltar, which is in danger, and French Syria is close to Suez, which is equally in danger. In Morocco as in Syria there are French troops and populations whose ears may open to the idea for which General de Gaulle stands. In other words, in the French colonial empire as well as in France itself, the general is the living centre of defence against the Germans and the Italians.

#### THE FREE FRENCH IN LIBYA, IN THE SAHARA, AND IN ERITREA

There is no need to recall the part played by the Free French troops in General Wavell's offensive against the Italians in Libya during the winter of 1940-41, or their share in the defence of Egypt against the German attack in the spring of 1941. The Free French troops which fought in Libya are composed almost entirely of Frenchmen from continental France. The accents of Paris and Marseilles are commonly heard among them, and they have the very spirit of our best regiments in the French army. Certain units include Frenchmen coming from Egypt who had gathered at Ismailia in July, 1940, immediately after General de Gaulle's first appeal. Others belonged to an infantry detachment which had been occupying Cyprus since the beginning of the war. Still other combatants, notably the Spahis, came into Egypt from Syria in response to the call of General de Larminat.

A part of these troops have been armed and trained by the English with first-class motorized equipment. They fought side by side with their brave comrades of the Army of the Nile.

It was Winston Churchill who first pointed out the presence of the Free French fighting units in the Army of the Nile in his statement to the House of Commons on December 12, 1940. He added that they had taken numbers of prisoners and an amount of material on December 9 at the capture of Sidi Barrani.

This success was owing in large part to the 1st Battalion of French Marines, commanded by a man from Lorraine, Commander Lorette. General de Gaulle cited this unit in an order of the day and King George VI praised the Free French forces in his message to General Wavell after the capture of Sidi Barrani.

All accounts mentioned the daring of the French troops and the enthusiasm they displayed in fighting against the Italians. They were in the advance guard at the attack on Bardia on January 5, 1941; and they had the honour of being sent to cut off the Italians' line of retreat toward Tobruk.

While the Free French were fighting in Libya others of General

de Gaulle's troops had carried out a successful raid against the Italians in the Libyan desert to the south of Tripoli. They had crossed the Sahara from Chad in the face of incredible difficulties. This was the famous surprise attack in which Colonel Colonna d'Ornano was killed.

The troops which carried out this fine operation comprised Free Frenchmen who had reached Equatorial Africa from London in October, 1940, when Cameroons, the Congo, Ubangi-Shari, Gabon and Chad were rallying to General de Gaulle. They contained also numbers of soldiers already there, especially the Senegalese tirailleurs. They were divided into one detachment which was mounted on camels and other units carried in motor trucks. Both sections succeeded in covering in three nights the three hundred miles between Chad and the Italian base at Murzuq, capital of the oasis of Fezzan. There they destroyed a fortified post in addition to landing fields, hangars, and several planes. After that, the danger of a surprise attack by the Italians against Free Chad was considerably lessened. The chief of the expedition, Colonel d'Ornano, a member of a well-known Corsican family, fell while leading the attack. General de Gaulle bestowed the following citation on him :

He never accepted the capitulation of our armies. He was one of the most zealous promoters of the adherence of French Equatorial African troops to the Free French forces. He was the first to fall while leading his men to the attack with most conspicuous gallantry. His death in the desert was a worthy end to the life of a soldier who was wholly devoted to the French Empire.

On February 7, 1941, the Free French engaged in operations in the oasis of Kufra which was an important station on the possible line of communication between Italian Libya and Ethiopia. Kufra is also the religious centre of the great Mohammedan sect of the Senusi. After a month's siege the Italian garrison surrendered to the Free French.

The Free French troops which fought in Eritrea left Fort Lamy, Chad, at the beginning of December, 1940. They reached Fort Sudan in trucks and were then taken by boat to Mersâ Taclai, where they joined the British troops on February 23, 1941. From that point was launched the drive on Keran in northern Eritrea. This advance prepared the way for the re-conquest of Jibuti and played a large part in driving the Italians completely out of Ethiopia.

Finally, General de Gaulle himself flew to Egypt in April, 1941. From Cairo, in agreement with the English, he took over the direction of operations of the Free French forces in Libya, Ethiopia, Somaliland, and Syria. Swift aeroplane travel permitted him to remain in contact with Brazzaville and the other bases in Free French Equatorial Africa.

Thus General de Gaulle found himself in the centre of the great effort of the Allies to consolidate themselves in Africa, to hold the Germans in the Mediterranean, and if possible to drive them out of it.

He was aided in this task by a number of men, French leaders who were marvellously prepared to do the job.

## CHAPTER XI

## MEN AROUND DE GAULLE : A FEW MAJOR FIGURES

MOST OF THE leaders who joined General de Gaulle were colonials. The explanation is probably to be found in the special conditions of this war, which are so different from those of any other. It was easier to escape from Indo-China or Jibuti than from occupied France. Moreover, France's chances of winning obviously lay in her colonial empire, and the world-wide nature of the war was most clearly apparent to men living there.

## GENERAL CATROUX

I had a long interview with General Catroux in his suite at the Carlton shortly after his arrival in London in the summer of 1940. He is a dark, slender, sensitive man who speaks in a quiet, precise manner. You feel that he is as familiar with political affairs as he is with military matters and that in reality he makes no distinction between them. He is, in the same way as Lyautey, a born empire leader.

The son of a general, General Catroux was born in 1879. Following his graduation from St. Cyr he served in the mounted company of the Foreign Legion in Indo-China. Later on under the orders of Colonel Lyautey, the future marshal, he served in the operations along the Algerian and Moroccan borders. After a term in Morocco under General d'Amade, one of the brilliant conquerors of North Africa, he became in 1912 orderly to the Governor General of Algiers, Charles Lutaud.

The declaration of war in 1914 found him an officer in the Algerian tirailleurs. He took part in the battles of Charleroi, Arras, and the Somme, received four citations, and was wounded and made prisoner at Bailleul in the Somme offensive of 1916.

After several attempts to escape he was interned in the German fortress of Magdeburg along with other French officers, among whom were the future generals De Gaulle and De Goy, the aviator Roland Garros, and Commander Teste. Catroux and Garros made one more attempt to escape. Garros got away, but the future general Catroux was captured and thrown into an unlighted dungeon, where he stayed for three months.

He was released at the end of the war and became military attaché at Constantinople with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. The following years saw him in Syria, where he was appointed governor of Damascus by Gouraud. Under the orders of Weygand he took part in the campaign against the Druses on the frontier of Palestine—that frontier which he was to pass later, in 1941, while liberating Syria from the Germans. In 1923 Marshal Lyautey, who had not forgotten him,

called him to Fez to be the head of his Second Bureau (G) during the campaign against the Riff.

In 1926 he was back in Syria as a colonel commanding the Second Bureau of the Army of the Levant. In 1928 he took over the former command of Colonel Lyautey at Aïn-Sefra. But it is in Morocco that he was to establish definitely his military reputation. Promoted to the rank of brigadier-general he was placed in command of the region of Marrakech after the surrender of the Riffian leader, Abd-el-Krim. In this position he worked with General Giraud in the reduction of the vast rebellious district of Djebel Saho in southern Morocco which kept up resistance. The two generals carried on a campaign which remained famous. They planned it on three lines : political, strategic, and economic. The officers for native affairs, acting under their orders, worked on the tribes and softened them up. The columns of troops advanced methodically, fighting only when absolutely necessary. Catroux took Ouarzazat, Giraud took Todra. The Foreign Legion built roads on the heels of the advancing columns, and the people saw order and civilization follow in the wake of our army. In 1934 General Catroux completed the pacification of the Anti-Atlas by the victory of the Tijni. But shortly after, while he was reviewing his triumphant troops, the heavy radio antenna of a plane flying low hit him in the head. He was badly wounded. After a long convalescence he recovered and took command of the 19th army corps in Algiers with the rank of major-general.

A few months before the war he was relieved of his command by General Gamelin, with whom he was at odds. But Mandel, Minister for the Colonies, recalled him in August, 1939, and made him Governor-General of Indo-China with the rank of general. General Catroux energetically fostered the spirit of patriotism in this rich French Asiatic colony. What course was he to take on the day the armistice agreements were signed in Bordeaux ? He notified the French Government that he would not abandon the war. He told them that Indo-China was prepared to resist and that it would resist.

The Government answered from Vichy by relieving General Catroux of his command. He accordingly turned over his office to Admiral Decoux, commander of the naval forces of the Far East. Immediately afterwards he set out for London to join De Gaulle, whom he had first met in a German prison camp.

General de Gaulle appointed General Catroux as delegate of the Free French forces for the Near East and the Balkans. He was stationed at Cairo until July, 1941, when the liberation of Syria from German influence brought him once more to Beyrouth as French High Commissary.

#### GENERAL LEGENTILHOMME

Short, blond, with lively, kindly features, General Legentilhomme is one of the youngest chiefs of the French colonial army. Up to the time of the armistice he was in command of the Allied forces

in French Somaliland and British Somaliland, under the orders of General Sir Archibald Wavell, commander-in-chief in the Near East. I saw him often in London in the summer of 1941 after he joined the Free French forces. His life story, like that of his elder comrade General Catroux, is the history of a fine soldier and a most human colonial administrator.

He was graduated from St. Cyr in 1907. In 1909 he took part in operations against the last of the great pirate chiefs of Tonkin : De Tham. Back in France in 1912 he passed through the 'Ecole de Guerre.' In 1914 he joined the 23rd Colonial Infantry Regiment. He was captured by the Germans in 1915 after having been wounded and cited for bravery. Liberated in 1918, he was assigned to the general staff of the French Army of the Levant (Syria) and attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force commanded by the famous English general, Allenby. It was at that time he met Wavell for the first time. Wavell was then a major attached to the British General Headquarters.

We find Legentilhomme in 1920 on the general staff of the commanding general in Indo-China ; in 1923 in the department of colonial troops in the Ministry of War in Paris, where he was under the future minister of war of the Vichy Government, General Huntziger ; in 1926 as chief of staff with the commanding general of the French island colony of Madagascar. Back in France in 1928 he was in service with the troops before being named lieutenant-colonel and chief of staff with General Billotte, in command of the Colonial Division in Paris.

In 1931 he left once more for Indo-China, where he was put in command of the Annamite troops and later of the First Military Territory on the Chinese frontier. Promoted to be a general in 1938 he took the courses at the *centre des hautes études militaires* (centre of advanced military studies at the 'Ecole de Guerre,' familiarly called the school for marshals, where the future great leaders of the French army are trained). Early in 1939 he was chosen to organize the defence of the French concessions in Djibuti. When war broke out he became commander of the theatre of operations in Somaliland, including both French and British Somaliland. It was in this position that General Legentilhomme had the honour, on the seventeenth of June, of being the first commander of French imperial forces to take a stand for the continuation of the struggle at the side of Great Britain.

After Italy entered the war he held the Fascist troops of Ethiopia in check until he was relieved of his command—like Catroux—by the Vichy Government at the end of July, 1940. He had made up his mind not to return to France and he reached Berbera on August 2, going from there to Aden. After a short stay in Egypt, he arrived in England having survived the wreck of the *Empress of Britain*, sunk by the Germans off the Irish coast.

Legentilhomme remained in London where I saw him often until the winter of 1940–41. He was occupied in completing the organization of the general staff and of the Free French troops and above all in preparing with De Gaulle and the English authorities—Lord Lloyd

in particular—the Abyssinian campaign and the liberation of French Somaliland.

Lord Lloyd, whom I knew well, was then Minister of the Colonies. He was a cold, stubborn, precise man, a decided adherent of war to the finish, a sort of English Mandel. From the day after the armistice he had understood the importance of French Africa in the war. I can still see him at his desk in Whitehall showing me the Gulf of Gabon, French Equatorial Africa, Dakar, and Syria on the globe.

"We will have unbelievable reverses," he said in his clear voice, accompanied by a toss of his smooth brown head, "we will perhaps lose essential positions in the Mediterranean, but that will not change the issue at all. Victory is certain because we have a longer breath than the Germans."

And he loved France almost as much as does Mr. Winston Churchill !

Lord Lloyd died in the beginning of 1941 ; he did not see the successful outcome of the operations on which he had worked so hard with Legentilhomme and his old friend Catroux. General Legentilhomme played a brilliant part in the liberation of Syria. Wounded in the right arm by a bomb from an aeroplane during the engagements in the Druse Mountains at the frontier of Palestine, he is now at Beyrouth with General Catroux.

#### GENERAL DE LARMINAT

General de Larminat, recently appointed Governor General of French Equatorial Africa by General de Gaulle, is a native of Lorraine. He was one of the St. Cyr class of 1914 who entered the war on the very date on which they were supposed to start their course at the school, one of the boys who went to the attack with white gloves and *casoar*.<sup>1</sup> A second lieutenant in the 121st Infantry Regiment, cited four times, wounded three times, he went into the colonial army in 1919 with the rank of captain. He received a fifth citation in Morocco in 1922, served in Mauritania and Indo-China, and returned to France to take courses at the 'Ecole de Guerre.

In 1936 he left for the Levant where he became chief of staff with the commanding general and later, during the war, chief of staff with the commander-in-chief of the Eastern Mediterranean. After the armistice he joined De Gaulle and went to Egypt, where he organized the Free French forces which were to take part in 1940-41 in the victorious offensive of the English against the Italians in Libya and Eritrea. It was General de Gaulle who summoned General Larminat from Egypt to French Equatorial Africa to become high commissary.

#### THIERRY D'ARGENLIEU

Here is one of the most striking figures among the group of Free French leaders : Thierry d'Argenlieu, ship's captain in the French

<sup>1</sup> *Casoar* : the famous high cap of the St. Cyr students ornamented with a white plume.

navy, and Father Superior of the Carmelites of France. Slender, with piercing eyes and a quiet voice, d'Argenlieu is a perfect example of the intellectual naval officer. He comes from an ancient Lyonese family who have always been divided between religious and military careers.

While two of his brothers entered the orders and one of his sisters died very young in a convent, Thierry d'Argenlieu began his career in the navy, in which he gained a fine reputation during the war of 1914-18. When the war was over, he took his vows and adopted the name of Father Louis of the Trinity. He became known for his studies of the spiritual life and his research into the history of the Order of the Carmelites.

At the beginning of the war, in 1939, he was mobilized into the navy and given his full rank. After the signing of the armistice agreements he joined General de Gaulle.

When the expedition to Dakar was planned he asked for and obtained permission to quit his post as naval chaplain of the Free French forces and to go with General de Gaulle in his military capacity.

Before Dakar he once more obtained permission to be sent ashore as plenipotentiary along with young Captain Jean Bécourt-Foch. While carrying out this dangerous mission both Father d'Argenlieu and the grandson of the illustrious marshal were wounded on September 23, 1940.

Ship's captain d'Argenlieu went to Canada in June and July, 1941, to lecture about De Gaulle and the Free French. There he met by chance one of his old friends from the navy, a distinguished officer who has remained in the Vichy army.

"Tell me," asked the Vichy officer, "why you are with De Gaulle." [ "*Parceque j'ai la foi*—Because I believe," said Argenlieu.

The questioner was puzzled and asked a little later : "But if the English lose after all, what then?"

"That is quite possible," answered Argenlieu quietly.

#### CAPTAIN FOCH

Jean Bécourt-Foch is the son of the only daughter of Marshal Foch, who married Captain Bécourt of the French army. The armistice found the grandson of the conqueror of 1918 at Toulouse, where he was learning to pilot pursuit planes. Immediately Jean Bécourt-Foch knew that he could not give up the fight. Hitler at Rethondes, imposing an armistice on the French in the very railway car in which Marshal Foch had imposed the Armistice of 1918 on the Germans—it just couldn't be. It wouldn't do for France in general or for the Foch family in particular. At least that's the way Jean Bécourt-Foch explained it with a wry smile. He reached Saint Jean de Luz, embarked on an English transport loaded with Polish soldiers, and joined General de Gaulle in London.

His one desire was to fight.

He volunteered to go to Dakar. Once in action, we have seen how he volunteered to accompany Father d'Argenlieu in the truce boat which tried to make contact with the defenders of the port. History tells the rest of the story. They failed to convince the defenders that they were being duped by the Germans and that they ought to come to terms with the Free French. Young Bécourt-Foch received his first wound from his misled compatriots. He has recovered and to-day he is continuing the fight against Hitler.

#### ADMIRAL MUSELIER, HEAD OF THE FREE FRENCH NAVY

He is a typical southerner—he was born in Marseilles—burning with vitality, courage and wit. Every time I saw him this impression was heightened. I met him, as I met most of the other leaders of the Free French forces, in London during the blitz of 1940. The admiral will forgive me if I add that every time I had the pleasure of meeting him his uniform was impeccable—but his cravat was badly tied !

Muselier is 58 years old and he looks 48. He entered the naval school at Brest, the great war port of Brittany, in 1899. He went into the war of 1914 with the rank of ship's lieutenant.

It may be noted in passing that Muselier, always an eccentric, began the first World War before anybody else. He was serving on the cruiser *Edgar Quinet*, attached to the international squadron sent to the Adriatic on the fifteenth of May, 1914, to maintain order during the revolt of the Albanians against their governor, Prince William of Wied.

The *Edgar Quinet*, recalled to Toulon by the declaration of war on August 2, 1914, stayed there only a few hours and then was sent against the Austrian navy. In 1915 Muselier caught Malta fever, got over it, and joined the Naval Fusiliers of the famous Admiral Ron'arch, who defended the Yser near Nieuport and Ypres on the Franco-Belgian frontier. For seven whole months he was in command of the 1st Company of the 1st Regiment, in which King Albert of Belgium was an honorary corporal.

When the Ron'arch Brigade was broken up, Lieutenant Muselier fought with the naval artillery detached in Lorraine, in Champagne, and again in Belgium. But all the time he was fighting he was thinking a great deal about the problems of land and sea armaments.

He entered the Ministry of the Navy in Paris, in the Ballistics<sup>1</sup> Division, but he only joined it with the understanding that he would be allowed to experiment on his inventions. As a result, for some time he commanded one of the Q-boats, the submarine chasers the French were then using. He even succeeded in sinking an enemy submarine.

After this exploit he was attached as bureau chief to Senator Jeanneney, Under-Secretary of State in the Cabinet. The Premier at that time was Georges Clemenceau.

Named corvette captain in July, 1918, Muselier commanded the dispatch-boat *Scarpe* until the end of the war and also afterwards,

<sup>1</sup> The science of the motion of projectiles.

operating first in the Atlantic and then in the Black Sea. At the beginning of 1919, with about a hundred sailors, he successfully defended the Russian port of Mariupol against the Bolsheviks. His boat was caught in the ice—the incidents of this defence against more than five thousand Russian Reds remained famous in the French navy.

Back in Sebastopol, the great Russian port occupied at that time by the Allies, Muselier saw at first hand the mutinies which started among the allied crews, who had become infected with the very bolshevism they were sent to fight. His ship was one of the very few on which the red flag was never raised. He had warned his men that he would rather blow up the *Scarpe* than let her fly any flag but the French tricolour.

Next we meet Muselier as head of the French Naval Mission in Berlin. Back in France, promoted to a full captaincy, he commanded the finest French battleships—the *Ernest Renan*, the *Voltaire*, the *Brittany*.

In 1939 he was a rear admiral in charge of the defence of the port of Cherbourg, then of Bizerte. Next he commanded the second division of cruisers in the Mediterranean and finally returned to his native Marseilles as admiral in command of the navy and the defence of the port.

He was retired with the rank of vice-admiral in 1939. But the Ministry of Munitions required his services and he was put in charge of co-ordinating the production of several factories working for national defence.

When the armistice negotiations began he was in Bordeaux still carrying out his duties. Fully aware of the implications of the situation he left immediately for Paris by car and arrived in time to destroy in the Ministry of the Navy and in other departments a number of documents which would have been useful to the Germans. Then he rushed toward the south, overhauling the German troops in their march, took in his stride like a young soldier the many difficulties encountered on the way and finally reached his native Marseilles.

From Marseilles by way of Gibraltar he joined General de Gaulle, who immediately placed him in command of the Free French war and merchant fleets.

## CHAPTER XII

### MEN AROUND DE GAULLE : A FEW ANONYMOUS FIGURES

BEHIND THESE LEADERS of the Free French, whose figures stand out in strong relief, there are officers of all ranks and all branches of the service. Then comes the mass of volunteers, simple soldiers and sailors—over fifty thousand trained men, plus twelve hundred aeroplane pilots. These brave Frenchmen equal their leaders in character. They have left their all—their families, property, professions. Their

instinct tells them that France has not survived for two thousand years by accepting defeats. They know that life for nations as well as for men lies first of all in the refusal of death.

They come from all points of the compass and most of them have had astonishing adventures. I talked with many of these men in England during the period from June, 1940, to February, 1941. . . . This tall, easy-going sailor who is now on sentry duty on the wharf at the port of S—— in England learned of the armistice on board his French freighter off Ceylon. He was on his way back from a long cruise and hadn't seen either France or any one of his family for two years. And yet he didn't hesitate. Rather than return to a France occupied by the Germans he made his choice and went to England by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

Naval Lieutenant B. R. was at Alexandria on the French warship *Tourville*. When the news of the armistice came, he and thirty other officers and sailors tried to reach Djibuti, where General Legentilhomme seemed likely to hold out against the Italians. When they learned that General Legentilhomme had left for London they went on to Ismailia and got ready to sail to England around the Cape. They reached the Kenya colony on foot, by car, and by boat. From Kenya they took five different freighters, one after the other. One stopped at Saint Helena, the famous island where Napoleon died. Imagine the joy of these young French officers to find a French consul near the Emperor's house at Longwood. The consul was moved to tears to see them and gave them a wonderful welcome. I saw Lieutenant B. R. when he reached London with his comrades, all of them in linen shorts and sun helmets. A telegram from his young wife in France was waiting for B. R. It told him of the birth of his son, a son whose name was not even mentioned in the message. The courageous young woman writing from occupied Paris ended her wire to her husband with these words : "I am proud of what you are doing."

God knows that the French authorities did nothing to encourage our soldiers and officers to try these daring escapes and travel to join De Gaulle and carry on the fight. God knows that they did everything, on the contrary, to discourage them. On June 13, 1940, during the last days of the war in France, while the German army was crossing the Loire, the French squadron at Toulon had carried out under cover of night a bombardment of the Italian ports of Genoa and La Spezia. Some of our finest cruisers, including the *Algerie* and the *Colbert*, and four or five others took part in these actions. For two hours they shelled the Italian cities and their factories without meeting any opposition worthy of the name. But no newspaper, no radio in France was allowed to talk about their success. It might have encouraged popular resistance—while the government was busy preparing French opinion for the armistice ! Still there were Frenchmen whose hearts did not flinch. Two days after the armistice, one of our best submarines, the *Narval*, slipped into Malta, the British base near Sicily, with its entire crew.

Another submarine, the brand-new *Creole*, was at Havre during the German advance. The ship had just been completed and still didn't have its engines. A tugboat captain, Captain C., said to himself, "We can't leave *that* to the Germans." And on his own responsibility, without waiting for orders, he towed the ship from Le Havre to Brest. The submarine, badly ballasted because of the absence of engines, danced and rolled. The Germans were advancing. Captain C., left Brest for Quiberon, then went on to La Palisse, still towing his submarine. Finally when rumours of the armistice and occupation of the French coastline by the Germans came through he decided to pull a fast one and calmly set out for England in the teeth of the enemy patrols. To-day the *Creole* fitted with English motors is in service against the Germans and the Italians.

A commercial oil-tanker of some 20,000 tons was saved under similar conditions by another captain, Captain G. This officer was stationed at Saint-Nazaire, with no recent news of the war and without orders. He saw a German plane and opened fire on it. Then he noticed that the cruiser *Jean Bart* was leaving the roadstead and heading for North Africa. Convinced that the Germans were at hand, he took his boat to England, to Milford Haven. . . . Naturally the English looked with a friendly eye on this contribution of a 20,000-ton tanker. As they thanked Captain G., he replied, "I would have taken my ship to Canada rather than surrender her to the enemy."

And what of the men who came back from Norway after the capture of Narvik? Imagine the mood of these victorious soldiers when they got to Brest and heard rumours of the armistice! One of them, B., an ensign with the short, young face of a stubborn kitten, hurried to the Prefecture Maritime. There were no orders. What was he to do? An English car that he met on the Square took him to Douarnenez to the Naval Registry Office. Everything there was in confusion. There was a crowd of sailors, soldiers, and officers demanding passage to England. B. organized them and formed a convoy of motorized fishing smacks. They left at midnight. The whole crew landed in Cornwall and reached Falmouth, where they were disarmed. One smack carrying fifty men, which had left before the convoy, was lost.

Another group of men had been engaged in furnishing supplies to the expeditionary forces in Norway. When the Allied forces left Norway, they returned from Narvik to England, to a port on the Clyde. One day as they were sailing from the Clyde toward Lorient, in France, the commander on his bridge heard Marshal Pétain's speech announcing the armistice over the radio. It was June 17. The officers got together, looked over the situation, and decided to keep on fighting.

On that same day twenty-one students in the high school at Brest who were preparing for the naval academy left on a fishing boat and reached England.

Then there was a Breton from Rennes, a hard-boiled guy with a drawling voice. He told his story this way:

"I was in Toulon with a buddy. When we heard about the

armistice we said : 'Nothing doing. Let's keep on with the Limeys.' But first we thought we'd go see the folks. So we asked for two passes for occupied France, since we were Bretons and Brittany is occupied. They wouldn't give them to us. Then we asked for permission to go on leave into unoccupied France, just to Roanne, near the border line. When we got to Roanne we tore a handkerchief in two and scrawled 'Demobilized' on each half. Then each one of us stuck a half on our sleeve.

"When we got to the border line, rather nervous all the same, the Boche on guard quietly stamped the rags ! We went on the train to Rennes. After we had seen our people we came back, still riding trains, to Port Vendres on the Mediterranean. We wanted to hop a ship, but no dice. Then we went to Spain, hoping to cross to Gibraltar on foot. A country boy led us over the frontier. But in Spain after four days without anything to eat we were nabbed by the Spaniards and put in jail at a place called Figueras. It was a hell of a jail. They starved you. Some Limeys were in too. The French and English consuls got us out and sent us on a boat to Gibraltar. From there we got to London."

Another sailor, an old fisherman from the Ile de Sein in Brittany, said : "When the German commander's boat hove to, every man left the island, even the civilians. The thirty-one of us got to England."

Lieutenant L., an intelligent dark boy, tall and full of energy, was in Champagne with an anti-aircraft battery. He went through the whole retreat as far as Saint-Malo, where he embarked. When I pestered him to find out how he had got to England one of the sailors with him said : "*On a été en pagaille !* Why, we just muddled through !"

Those are only a few stories. The rest are just like them. All these French officers and sailors talk as if they had done something perfectly normal and casual, something they didn't need to explain or still less justify. They never believed in a German invasion of England because they knew how hard it is to cross the sea and land in enemy territory. What's more, they believed in Englishmen. And above everything they didn't accept the surrender of France.

A young officer said to me, "You can't say to your enemies : 'Now that you've beaten us we are with you.' The Germans didn't do any such thing in 1918. What the Vichy people call collaboration with Germany is all a lot of hooey . . . So what ? If we are to accept defeat life is not worth living."

That's what General de Gaulle's soldiers and sailors are like. And here's a typical port where they have been stationed :

A good-sized town on the west coast of England . . . It looks peaceful, with its walks along the shore bordered by green grass plots. On the verandas of the big hotels a few travellers read their newspapers. The only signs that betray the existence of a war are two silvery balloons not far from the inlet where a lighthouse stands. The motionless grey forms that one can make out on the water are the ships

of Free France : the *Surcouf*, the largest submarine in the world, the only one to carry two 200-calibre guns, its own plane, and a crew of one hundred and fifty ; the *Triomphant*, all mauve under its new camouflage, one of the fastest destroyers in existence ; the *Courbet*, a cruiser somewhat out of date but whose anti-aircraft guns recently downed a German aeroplane. And there are the submarines : the *Rubis*, the *Emeraude*. Over here you can see the *Léopard*, the *Junon*, the *Minerve*, and the *Moqueuse*, and still more war and merchant ships all bearing fine old French names, the flamboyant and old-fashioned names of gods and goddesses, animals and famous men. Twenty-five warships all told, ninety or more merchant vessels, plus a few hundred auxiliary boats. All of them are doing active service, scattered among various ports of England and of the British and Free French empires.

The movements of these vessels are naturally kept secret. But in July, 1941, the remarkable officer in command of the *Rubis*, Commandant Cabanier, was invited by the British Broadcasting Company in London to broadcast several episodes in the life of the submarine and its crew to the French in France and in the Empire. The Commandant appreciated the importance of maintaining contact between his brave crew and their compatriots in occupied and unoccupied France. He felt that some true accounts of his activities would bring hope to French hearts. Here are the essential points of his broadcast :

"I am not going to begin the story of the submarine *Rubis* until April, 1940, although I had then been in command for almost three months. My reason is that it was at this date that the war really began.

"You remember the atmosphere of Spring, 1940 ; Norway had been invaded by the Germans. Our task was to attack their shipping in the North Sea and the narrows of the Skagerrak. The ship was ready. One last inspection of the arms and of the commands and it would be ready to sail. The men themselves were also ready. The two years I had spent with them told me that. Everyone on board knew his comrades and realized that among the less than fifty men in the crew there was a feeling of unity, that it was a ship with a wonderfully homogeneous soul. Bacchus, our mascot, whom I forgot to introduce to you, knew in his dog soul his role on shipboard. In the course of a sudden manœuvre, he must retire to his corner so as not to annoy anyone. But, on the contrary, when all was calm he must come out and entertain all of us, look at us with his soulful eyes, at least attract our attention by tapping us with his paw or seizing our vests with his teeth.

"We sailed north, passed the straits of Calais and went to get our orders in an English port. Visits and explanations, and then they asked me when we would be ready for the great expedition. 'Tomorrow,' I said. We then took aboard a British liaison officer and two seamen who were to interpret the English signals which were pretty unfamiliar to us. The two English seamen, Jimmy and Eugene, have not left us since that day and they hope to finish the war on board.

"The next day the *Rubis* slipped in alone between the banks of sand. It passed the hulk of a torpedo boat sunk by bombs from aeroplanes in the same way that many merchant vessels were wrecked. It slid through the narrow passages between the English defensive mine fields and at last reached the North Sea it had dreamed so much about. Cruising under the surface during the day and on the surface at night, it headed slowly for the Skaggerak by zigzag routes which enabled it to avoid the known German mine fields. As for the unknown mine fields, it ignored them.

"But what was that explosion which shook the coast? No one said anything; we looked at each other a little surprised because it was the first we had heard. Later the explosions occurred in succession and we became used to them. They were the reverberations from the explosion of depth charges and of aeroplane bombs somewhere in the North Sea. Then the first mine was reflected in the mirrors of the periscope. For months we were going to encounter hundreds of them making it necessary, particularly at night, for us to manœuvre swiftly to escape them.

"Later the noise of the propellers increased, the explosions followed each other at swifter intervals. Looking through the periscope we could also see trawlers with enemy planes in pursuit. We entered the Skaggerak. The night, the sky, and the sea were illuminated by gunfire. Luckily fog settled around, enabling us to conceal ourselves, not without certain emotions.

"All of a sudden the mass of an enemy trawler appeared at our bow. The *Rubis* swerved to the left and the German disappeared in the fog. Now the reefs weren't far off and the current was violent. Bad news: our British companion, the submarine *Seal* carrying on its operations near us, had just disappeared. Later our activities were completed; they were accompanied by powerful emotions which I will describe to you when the war is over. After twelve days at sea, we returned to our base to receive a message of congratulation from Admiral Horton, commander of the allied submarine force.

"A few days for rest, for overhauling, for a rapid check-up of torpedoes and mine shipments and the *Rubis* was off again. The task was a more difficult one this time. The German no longer took to the sea. For transportation he used the numerous fjords and straits along the Norwegian coast. There we must find him. Defying the aeroplane patrol, the look-out stations, the currents, the rocks, the *Rubis* slipped into places where the enemy believed himself to be protected and surprised him. This time while passing under the surface one hundred metres from the rocks, then cruising so near the coast that the flower pots in the windows seemed to fill the mirror of the periscope, the *Rubis* approached the German who was secure in the knowledge that no one would molest him.

"Returning to port, as soon as its black mass was seen on the horizon, the semaphore of the port signalled the following message from Admiral Horton: 'Well done, *Rubis*, again,' a message of

congratulation more prized than any other that a British admiral addresses to a ship in his fleet.

"The next time the attacking operations of the *Rubis* were to take it very far afield, to the interior of the fjords, it would require two days underwater in places that were very well defended. The job was so dangerous that Admiral Horton asked me to study it alone for twenty-four hours. 'If you would prefer to undertake something else, tell me, don't hesitate to,' he said to me, 'there is other work to be done and my esteem for you and your valiant ship will not be lessened.' For twelve hours I mulled over all the phases of the problem, then I began to think that if the game were played with a cool head, it could be won. During the next twelve hours I prepared the smaller details, leaving nothing to chance. Then, when he arrived with the fleet, I gave Admiral Horton my eager consent.

"His handsome sailor's face, so often photographed during the last war, did not change expression, but in his eyes I caught a glimpse of emotion. To economize on electricity, we were to turn on the lights on shipboard only at rare intervals ; we were not going to do any cooking on the expedition ; thermos bottles had been purchased to carry hot coffee ; cold meals had been prepared. We left. Before going under the surface for the last time before the operation, at half-past two in the morning with the sun not set but glowing in the horizon, a German torpedo-boat came along at top speed, made straight for us ; we submerged, then he was over us, he turned, listened, stopped, went over the course again, then disappeared into the distance. I could have torpedoed her five times, but the order was not to do so before striking at the troop transports which used that route to the calm waters behind the blue mountains. A hard condition of obedience which I was to relieve on another occasion ! We proceeded then toward the interior. It was Sunday ; the weather was beautiful. The fjord was a riot of colour and very childlike in appearance with its small white houses built in perfect alignment. But the patrols were there, very close to us ; they went back and forth above us. When the noise of their propellers diminished, I chanced a few glimpses through the periscope on the surface of the water to size up the situation and make a plan. Horrors ! All of a sudden I glimpsed a peaceful rowing expedition ; two Norwegians with their backs to me were drinking beer from bottles. In a cold sweat I quickly pulled in the periscope and told those below what I had seen. I heard an explosion of laughter, then some expressions of regret about the lucky ones who were drinking beer. Once more the German paid his accustomed tribute and we proceeded toward the mouth of the fjord. Despite the usual precautions, the oxygen got into the air ; the atmosphere became thick ; respiration was difficult ; all the unoccupied men were asleep ; no one spoke. Bacchus was sick and we had to put him on a higher level. In my compartment I froze for thirty hours at five degrees above zero, but the humidity was so high that water dripped from everywhere, suggesting the warmth of the sun on the surface. All of a sudden

came a loud noise of propellers, different from that of the escort ships, then reduced in numbers ; the noise subsided ; I looked out and saw a flag with a Nazi cross in the stern of a swift vedette boat on which were aligned six depth charges. I pulled in the periscope rapidly, the noise became intense again, then the reverberation seemed to die away but affected the balance of the compartment. For twenty minutes the vedette boat remained above us. I didn't say anything but everyone understood and the minutes were long in passing. Finally it disappeared at top speed and didn't come back again. The *Rubis* left the fjord and thirty-six hours later, it came to the surface to clear the atmosphere, because it had to go beneath the surface again to get a safe distance away from the coast. Then it returned to its base.

"The news was becoming more and more alarming in June, 1940. France had been invaded, we felt that at home after losing a battle they were perhaps going to lose the country. We remained silent. We stole looks at each other. The French admiralty demanded the return of the *Rubis*, the arrangements were made and the lords of the Admiralty and Admiral Horton sent messages of congratulation and of regret that we were leaving. Here is one of them : 'At the moment when you have finished your third operation I would like to express my admiration for the talent and the success that has characterized your endeavours. I infinitely regret losing the services of the *Rubis*.' The coast of France fell piece by piece into the hands of the Germans, French vessels came to England and the *Rubis* was ordered to remain and await instructions.

"Later General de Gaulle and Admiral Muselier appeared and the *Rubis* unanimously allied itself with the Free French movement. As free men, all of us had chosen. At the same time the king of England conferred the highest distinctions of the British army upon the *Rubis* and General de Gaulle gave it an army citation. After two months for necessary repairs, it took up the struggle again.

"Here you will forgive me for skipping rapidly, later I will tell you the rest of the story. It is enough for you to know that along the German coast, the North Sea, the coasts of Norway and the Atlantic in the course of patrol, anchoring-place and mining operations and on special missions, the *Rubis* again showed itself to be worthy of its reputation. Life in our fleet continues as in the past, the ties of friendship are tightened and cemented by the memory of our comrades who will never return. To conclude ; on the anniversary of his arrival in England, Admiral Muselier reviewed the submarine fleet and awarded the Croix de Guerre to the crews of the *Rubis* and the *Minerve*. At this time the *Rubis*, since April, 1940, had covered 15,000 miles and had been submerged for a period of 1,500 hours.

"This is the simple story of a French submarine which continues the struggle in your name."

In the navy, as in the rest of the Free French forces General de Gaulle had to overcome a very great difficulty that the leaders of the Polish, Czechoslovakian, and Belgian forces didn't have to cope with :

he had to form an army without the benefit of definite units already in existence and without any help from the French Government.

Because the French Government continues to exist in theory as a free government, not a single unit of the French navy or army has been allowed to leave the country. The Frenchmen who wanted to fight on had to make up their minds as individuals and under pressure not only from the enemy, as was the case for all the Allies, but from their own government as well.

The leaders of the Free French forces had to form their land, sea, and air forces out of this collection of individual volunteers of all kinds and conditions. They succeeded because of the loyalty of the men and the confidence that they themselves inspired.

Their success is complete : the tide of enlistments grows with the growing prestige of General de Gaulle's name ; it grows as people put more faith in a British victory ; it grows with the ever-increasing hatred of the Germans.

This tide of enlistments is equally the result of personal contact in many cases. It is often the already enrolled volunteers that persuade new volunteers to join up. To get an idea of the spirit in which the call is answered and the spirit in which they serve General de Gaulle we must read a letter from a sailor of the Free French navy to one of his former chiefs.

This sailor was aboard a destroyer, the *Léopard*. On October 29, 1940, in a letter to Commandant C., he described his relations with French sailors who had not signed up with De Gaulle and who remained aboard the French commercial ships interned in the same English port where the *Léopard* was docked.

#### COMMANDANT :

I have already written personally to the comrades who remain on our ships to try to make them understand the satisfactions that our new life procures for us and above all how firm is our faith in the final victory. I have tried also to appeal to their pride with a phrase of this nature : 'I know how humiliating it must be for you to see the English coming in and out of the port every day and watching you, you who are forced to remain inactive, at a time when the liberty of our country is at stake ; but if one day you have the courage there is still a place for you among us.' I addressed this letter to a comrade on the *Duguay-Trouin* who rallied to our cause but who had been discouraged by the Oran incidents. Do you think I did well ? We are all very touched that you have not forgotten your 'children' from the first naval class. I heard you the other day when you made your radio address. I repeated the essential points to my comrades. We are very proud that your feelings, which are the same as ours, can be expressed in this manner to all parts of the world. We hope that our dear ones in France were able to hear them and draw a little hope from them.

The *Léopard* gets more and more lively every day ; at present we are living in the atmosphere of a general inspection. Think, Commandant, Admiral Muselier is due to arrive to-morrow !

Commandant Richard is very good to me ; he has shown me many considerations which have touched me deeply and which have won my everlasting devotion ; particularly he showed me a great mark of confidence in designating me as the head of the finest section of the D.C.A. (*Service de la Défense contre Avions*, or Anti-aircraft Service) on board. As I surely owe this to you I want to thank you for it ; I will try to be worthy of it. We are pleased that we have been reunited with our comrades, whom we left in Ismailia to join the navy ; they arrived in England a few days after us. There are some of them aboard the *Léopard*.

We offer you, Commandant, our respectful greetings.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

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Every day by all kinds of ways and means, courageous Frenchmen still keep travelling from France to England. There is a widespread story of a young landowner from Northern France who crossed the Channel in an aeroplane he had built himself with the help of the peasants of his village. When he landed on an English airfield and was asked how he felt he answered :

"I am glad to be able to fight a second war for my country."

In the middle of September, 1941, the 17th to be exact, five French schoolboys, cold, wet, hungry, and still carrying their school books, arrived in England, from across the choppy Channel, in two frail twelve-foot canoes.

Their ages ranged from seventeen to nineteen. None of them could speak a word of English. They explained that they had spent two days and nights at sea after their escape. Some Germans had seen them paddle out from a river near Boulogne into the sea, but believed they were going on a pleasure junket and did not shoot.

Using the stars for guidance, the boys—two pairs of brothers and a sixteen-year-old friend—heeded west. But an adverse current held their tiny craft back and the waves tossed them dangerously. Those who know the choppy seas of that waterway will appreciate what that means. The youngsters did not dare hoist their improvised sails during the daylight hours, lest they be sighted from the French coast. They paddled along frantically to widen the distance between their canoes and their native shore. When darkness came they set sail, calling to each other from time to time to be sure they were not separated. The next morning they paddled again in the rough waves, with sails folded to keep out of view as much as possible of German patrol planes.

After a second night's toil and anxiety, they saw the English coast. As it approached a beach one of the canoes struck a rock and sank but

the three boys in it succeeded in swimming ashore. The other boat was beached safely. The five youngsters were exhausted but happy when the Security Police from Eastbourne took them into their custody, providing hot baths, dry clothes and food. They said they could not stand the Germans any longer and had decided to join the Free French to fight and liberate their country.

They carried a few letters for relatives and friends in England and they had brought their school books to continue their studies while waiting to be of use to General de Gaulle.

As soon as he was informed of their adventure, Mr. Winston Churchill invited the five French boys to 10 Downing Street where the Prime Minister and Mrs. Churchill joined them in a toast to France. The youths were so moved that tears filled their eyes. No reward could be more precious to them than this proof of esteem and friendship for France from the man who personifies Allied resistance, and the knowledge that they, in their small way, had contributed to keeping this esteem and friendship alive.

It is against men like these that the Germans induced Marshal Pétain to take drastic action. Hundreds of Free French soldiers, officers, and sympathizers in France and abroad have been condemned to death or imprisonment or deprived of their citizenship and possessions. Their activities, which are entirely devoted to the liberation of the country, have been declared treacherous.

And yet we know from a very good source that when he heard that the Free French forces had fought brilliantly at Bardia Marshal Pétain told a diplomat with a bitter smile :

"Well done ! And if we catch one of these men we are supposed to shoot them !"

These expressions of regret which the marshal feels called upon to confide to his intimates do not lessen the weight of material dangers which burden the Free French and do not lessen their spiritual troubles, which are even heavier ones.

After the armistice of June, 1940, every Frenchman found himself faced with a cruel alternative. He either had to stop fighting while our allies kept up the struggle, or had to make up his mind to disobey the French leaders he had been trained to follow and respect from his youth. His choice lay between surrender to the enemy or revolt against the decisions of the Government and the military command of France.

Faced with this alternative the Free French turned down surrender and determined to continue the struggle. They accepted separation from their families, loss of their property, loss of citizenship, and the death sentence. They accepted all that because they knew that they were right, because they knew that the condemnations that would be heaped on their heads were unjust and meaningless, imposed on the subservient Vichy Government by a victorious enemy.

The Free French know in fact that the overwhelming majority of Frenchmen at home are in complete agreement with them despite the

official opposition of the Government. Consequently they are anxious to do nothing which might alter the clarity of their position. They want to fight the Germans and their allies and helpers, but they are interested in no other fight of any kind. They want no argument on questions of French internal policy, no resurrection of old political quarrels. They want war against the invaders and their henchmen. But they are determined to maintain the closest friendship among Frenchmen of all shades of opinion, of all religions, of all races, provided only that they be determined to break the domination of the enemy.

These men—officers, soldiers, sailors, pilots—went to England in response to the same impulse as that which motivated General de Gaulle himself. Some of them didn't even know who De Gaulle was. They joined him because he represented France to them. But their allegiance has nothing in common with the fanaticism of the masses in totalitarian countries. For our Free French the leader is the symbol of the nation and worthy of respect as such. This makes the leader conduct himself as the representative of France and urges him to conform to the conception of France that his companions hold in common. It is obvious here that there is no question of dictatorship, no idolatry of an individual. What we see is obedience freely given for the sake of an idea : a purely French manifestation.

These Frenchmen of differing opinions who followed as one man their patriotic instincts are following the path of truth. In their own fashion they are re-enacting the excellent fable of Mickiewicz :

A woman had fallen into a swoon and her son called the doctors.

One of the doctors said she should be treated according to the method of Brown. But the others said, "It's a bad method. Better that she stay in her swoon and die than to be treated according to Brown."

Then the son said, "Treat her any way you like, so long as you cure her." But the doctors could not agree ; they wouldn't yield a peg to each other. Finally the son out of grief and despair cried out : "Oh, Mother !" and the mother awoke at the sound of her son's voice and was cured.

The Free French know that their duty is to cry "Oh, Mother !" to France. By fighting they utter the cry and France hears them. She recognizes the call that will deliver her.

France, confused for a moment by the terrible shock of June, 1940, is recovering bit by bit. As she regains consciousness of herself she begins to communicate with the Free French. She sustains and inspires this handful of her loyal sons who have never ceased to believe in her and to call her name.

## CHAPTER XIII

## MESSAGES FROM COMPATRIOTS TO THE FREE FRENCH

TO UNDERSTAND THE morale of the French people inside France since the German invasion we must understand exactly what, to them, constituted defeat. We must put ourselves in their place in remembering first of all that this defeat was different from any that they had known before.

I was an officer attached to General Headquarters. I saw the army dealt a death blow, pierced by German tanks in the few days between the thirteenth and the eighteenth of May ; a long needle penetrated the head and the nervous centres (organs of command, telephones, supplies) while the other members were still active and considered themselves alive. The High Command knew the Battle of France was lost, but the troops had not yet sensed it and the civil population were feeling it even less.

One saw the country taking a breath, all unknowing, while the retreat was bringing on her agony. The children hemmed and hawed in the schools; peasants stood at the gates of their cottages, lovers wandered in the woods. The innkeeper of the little town of Esbly near Meux, on the night when General Headquarters left for the south, its officers white with chagrin, said to me without understanding it at all :

"Things aren't going too badly, are they ?"

On June 14 the villages of the Loire, isolated by the recoil of the armies, did not suspect that the Germans held Paris. They thought we were going to re-establish ourselves as we did at the Marne; at the very time the Government was already preparing to ask for an armistice. And then on the seventeenth Pétain broke the silence. So the French in one second had to slip from total confidence (our beautiful army, the powerful old cannons, the five million men, the memory of Verdun) to total defeat (Here are the Germans !).

Forty million people had the impression of falling into a trap : a sort of unconsciousness. When they awoke their feet and hands were bound, but they had not *felt* defeat. They *recorded* the fact but they did not *admit* it. And they will admit it less and less, thank God !

The great leaders, struck as professionals by the technical disaster, admitted the defeat as obvious.

From this arose the gap between the people and their leaders and the loneliness of both of them. The people did not understand the decisions of their leaders. The leaders did not understand why the people did not understand. Certain leaders called the public protest "a revolutionary spirit" when in truth it was more reasonable than their own discouragement.

There remained a real force in these people, in the French empire, above all in England—a force which the people sensed and the old

technicians denied. It was the opening wedge in the conflict between the supporters of Pétain and the supporters of De Gaulle.

At this point the Germans arrived. A woman writes of this event : "The trains weren't running, newspapers were not arriving, and the peasants were not working. The Germans arrived, deferential, respectful, but still horrible—elementary automatons."

Little by little the people, muzzled, bound, stated that the Germans were not as clever as they had feared. They commented at the same time on the English power of resistance and began to murmur : "Was it *that* which defeated us ?" A soldier wrote : "France isn't dead ; she cannot die." And another : "We cannot speak any more but we can still think."

I am quoting several extracts from letters. These are texts that figure in a collection of letters from France entitled *They Speak for a Nation*, which has already been published under the signatures of Mlle Eve Curie, M. Roussy de Sales, and myself. I reproduce here certain messages from our compatriots held captive by Germany because nothing can better represent their opinions.

The French are prisoners to-day as no other great people in history have ever been before—those in the supposedly unoccupied zone as well as those in the occupied zone. The Germans pursue a programme so methodical and so brutal in its use of all the modern means of surveillance and constraint that freedom has disappeared from the entire territory of France.

Not only are the French prevented from holding meetings, voting, travelling, buying, and selling as they please, but they have also lost the liberty of speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Since the signing of armistice agreements in June they have received no newspapers, books, or letters which have escaped the censor. And private letters themselves have been submitted to the strictest examination whether coming out of France or going into it.

In a word the French have been cut off from life, from the truth of the situation, at a time when they need most to know about it because their future depends upon it. They are cut off from the outside world, from their allies, and from their friends at a moment when these friends are fighting for their common safety and when they, as Frenchmen, have so many messages to address to them.

In their distress the French have fallen back on their own resources, they have set aside all the apparatus of German propaganda, and deprived of all modern means of communication they write letters, which thousands of ingenious methods carry to the outside world.

The French write to the outside world more than they ever have before because it is the outside world which is their only hope. They write to friends whom they might know but above all they write to addresses that kindle their imagination, to people and to groups that appear to them to be symbols of friendship and liberty. They write to great radio stations and to great English and American newspapers, and they write to General de Gaulle.

To England they send the hopes of an unhappy ally for an ally who still fights for the common safety.

To America they address appeals for news, for comfort, for the help of a great people regarded as a stronger and more fortunate brother.

Toward the Free French, finally, they show the spirit of an imprisoned family towards parents who remain free and who fight.

On September, 1940, a young movie producer demobilized and living in unoccupied France wrote to a friend in America how he had heard the first appeal of General de Gaulle :

Some days after the armistice our regiment had been stationed in a little village of the Creuse. The situation was appalling. No newspapers, the only source of information a decrepit radio whose announcements smelled the Nazi at a hundred feet. . . .

One evening I strolled along the village main street with an officer friend. We were disturbed and unhappy. This defeat, this disorder, we couldn't yet understand it. We were afraid of the future. We knew the Germans and knew what they were capable of. The incomprehension of the populace and the soldiers of the immensity of the catastrophe that had struck down our beautiful country frightened us and made us fear the worst. Marshal Pétain was a sincere man, it seemed, but then why did he surround himself with that riffraff—Laval, vice-president of the Council, that scoundrel who was steeped in all kinds of equivocal affairs, that swindler who only waited the opportunity to become the master of France, and all the other ministers who were no better. The 'French' radio had announced in the morning that England's defeat was a matter of hours.

My comrade and I for the twentieth time paced down the gloomy street—always the blackout—when suddenly, passing in front of a house with drawn blinds but from which a faint light issued, a powerful voice riveted us to the spot. . . . A voice from the sky, a voice that shed a light in the blackness surrounding us, a radio voice that was saying in French : "London calling." We listened to the first speech of General de Gaulle. Little by little people flocked to the window. Soldiers, officers, civilians. Those who didn't want to hear left at once. A woman seizing her husband's arm tried to drag him away, saying : "Come on, let's not listen to *that*!" But the man, without a word, freed himself and remained listening.

The voice talked and talked. A good voice, an assured voice, a clarion voice that accused those who had capitulated—a voice that said to us, in short : "No, it's not ended. England keeps going. France will live." . . .

At the end of the speech, only about ten persons remained before the closed blinds. Each turned his head a little to one side not to be seen by his neighbour. There were tears in every eye.

As soon as they learned in this way over the London radio that a Frenchman, a French officer, had decided not to admit defeat but to continue the war, French people of all regions and all trades sent him their approval, their wishes, their information, and their offers of help.

Doubtless in the beginning they represented only a minority of far-seeing patriots. Every one had not understood, from the first days that followed the armistice, the clear facts of the situation : the utter impossibility of ever getting along with the Germans, and the definite possibility of winning the war on the side of England and the Free French.

On November 21, 1941, a correspondent from Provence writes to General de Gaulle :

'For a long time, from the very first hour, I have felt the need to say thank you to you, thank you for saving the honour of our unhappy country, thank you for permitting us to hope again.'

It is not always easy to defend this point of view. It is astonishing to see how easily we fall into the traps that are placed under our feet, though they are obvious ones, and how often also feeling and passion hold sway over reasoning power. But I think that we grow to understand a little better every day. May the army of those that defend our liberties—better still those that defend right and justice—grow larger every day ! Every day I say to them, I say to you, Thank you ! One day we shall see that he whom they have condemned to death was worthy of our country.

As time passed the error committed in signing the armistice agreements became more and more apparent to the majority of Frenchmen. The courageous persistence of the Free French and their leaders stood out in its true light.

The idea most frequently expressed in the letters written to General de Gaulle is that he has saved honour in waiting to save the country. A mother writes from Nimes in the South of France on August 8, 1940 :

Thus we still have a little pride in being French, while waiting to avenge ourselves.

Another says :

We have not given birth to our sons for them to become Boches.

Another still explains :

In Savoie we have admitted neither the abandonment of our English comrades nor the abandonment of France. If elsewhere in several places there may have been sad defections, if certain

chiefs were not equal to their tasks, in Savoie we fought well : facing the Germans, with the Italians at their backs, despite their inferiority and precarious armament, our soldiers held firm. They are not reconciled to the nation's surrender. They are all ready to join with you when the moment of liberation comes. In our province General de Gaulle is the legendary hero who saved the empire and who will save France. Now that he has saved our honour we will know how to wait. Of small moment are sufferings, sadness, and anxieties when one can again hold up one's head.

I should like you also to know how admirable our clergy were in the first days when we all thought ourselves lost, before your broadcasts brought us the confirmation of your continuation of the fight. It was our clergy who, from the pulpits, in our churches, told us to hope in England.

One sees little people in the French provinces—lost among German ‘tourists,’ German soldiers in uniform and in civilian clothes, Gestapo agents—who burn to speak not only of their small affairs but of general ideas, not to personal confidants but to groups capable of aiding France, of helping what they know is justice.

A war veteran of 1914 and 1940 writes to General de Gaulle on November 26, 1940 :

**GENERAL DE GAULLE, Chief of the French armies in England**

I have the opportunity and the great joy to be able to send you this word. I have only a few minutes, but enough time for my heart to tell you that 95 per cent of the French are with you and our English friends.

We await you with impatience to save us from the Teuton yoke. We are ready to join you ; come quickly ; we guarantee you the most complete success. . . .

I am an old combatant, a volunteer in the other war. I was in this one but I couldn't last on account of my 1917 wound.

Every evening we hang over the radio in every house, with some rare exceptions ; we listen to London, Brazzaville, and Boston as well as New York.

If you can, tell the Americans that we, the old veterans, thank them for what they are doing for you, and the same to the Canadians, all the English colonies, and all the colonies of Free France. Tell our English friends and the French volunteers of our confidence in them. We are enduring the Boches stoically ; we await the day of vengeance ; they'll pay dear for the English children they have killed as well as for the French.

General, pardon my scrawl, but the time is short and I tremble so with joy !

Courage, we'll get them !

Long live England ! Long live Free France !

And isn't it moving, this "au revoir" of a family returning from the unoccupied zone to the occupied one? It is a short letter sent at the end of the month of August, 1940 :

With great regret, but one cannot abandon one's home and one's living, we are returning to the occupied zone. Within this boundary of France where we can no longer listen to the British Broadcasting Company a French mother prays for and believes in an English victory—a victory which will save France. I sign this with the cross of Lorraine—my own signature will reach you after the victory.

Many correspondents request that an answer be addressed to them over the English or American radio or by mail to Free France at Brazzaville. Thus a real exchange of news and ideas has been established between the French inside France and the Free French.

A man writing from unoccupied France as early as August 10, 1940, says :

I was glad that my letter of July 10 reached you and to hear you over the radio on August 2. Frenchmen who think as I do and recognize who our real friends are grow more and more numerous. Everyone is convinced of your victory; a great empire like England cannot be conquered; through you and General de Gaulle France will live again.

Once they understood the method of communicating with the outside, many brave people acquired the idea of collaborating with the Free French. In August, 1940, a man wrote this to General de Gaulle :

This is the seventh letter I have addressed to you, and I dare hope that at least one of them will have reached you.

How can we sufficiently express the sentiments we feel for you, General, for you who have been able to unite hearts and wills? How many would fly to you if an insurmountable barrier were not raised between us. But we must indeed find the door which, as you tell us, will not be closed.

As I wrote you before, the masses, the little people, were disgusted at the armistice. The regular officers and some of the reserves are beginning to wake up. All are waiting for the struggle to start again. Everyone who has a radio listens to London, and your talks are commented on each time. What is needed is for the "hards" to get to know each other, have a leader, inside information and plans. And it can be done.

We pray for you and remain respectfully devoted to your orders.

In the same spirit a group of former soldiers of 1914-18 wrote to "General de Gaulle and the Free French of France and the Empire" :

. . . We all hope that the signing of the peace treaty will take place in Berlin and not in Paris. . . . We will never accept

collaboration with our enemies. . . . You can therefore count on many of us. Each in his own sphere we are working silently for our murdered country so that she may again resume her true place in the civilized world in liberty, equality, and fraternity. . . . We know how to await the *J* [day] and the *H* [hour]<sup>1</sup> of deliverance and our turn for the personal intervention which we shall bring to the aid of the allies. Therein is the true co-operation. . . .

A former soldier living in a historic village at the mouth of the Rhone says :

GENTLEMEN,

I am happy to write to you ; it seems as though I were writing to the other France, the France for whom I fought during fifty months between '14 and '18. I have tears in my eyes when I think of you all who are over there to continue the struggle and maintain our tradition of honour.

Have no fear ; everything here is reawakening day by day. We also are fighting for all of you. We are reviving energies. We plead your cause. Our hearts and our confidence in you are our sole arms, but with what ardour we love to use them. The days go by and reward us, and I can tell you with joy and certainty that 95 per cent of the French in France are with you. If it were only possible to join you, you would see the proof of my assertion. What is our life now ? It draws to its close and we die of rage thinking of our polluted country which we had made so great and beautiful. We would love to die to deliver it. We have confidence in you, in our allies who are always dear to us. We love you ; you are our sole hope ; we hate and—we wait. Courage and confidence.

I—

Croix de Guerre, Medaille Militaire.

Wounded : September 6, 1914.

April 16, 1917.

August 30, 1918.

Little by little the emotion of the French passed from the domain of ideas to that of acts. As German oppression grew heavier, as the war waged by the English and the Free French enlarged, as Vichy's policy of collaboration with the Germans was proved, popular indignation acquired a new strength. The first really striking example of this awakening of public opinion was given by the students in Paris on November 11, 1941.

It is known that since 1918 the anniversary of the armistice has been one of the most closely observed French holidays. Rare were those who did not go to kneel at a tomb or before a monument. There was

<sup>1</sup> In the orders of attack of the French army the day and the hour are indicated by letters and are not revealed until the last moment.

something in the atmosphere of France on that day other than the echo of marching feet and the official ceremonics : the dead who had won the victory seemed actually to be present. The Germans evidently forbade any such celebration on November 11, 1940. They wanted to destroy everything in France, even memories.

When the day came, however, the students began to form processions in the Latin Quarter before noon. Little by little they gained the Champs Elysées and the Arc de Triomphe where the Unknown Soldier reposes guarded by a German contingent. The students were gay. That was the watchword. Girls and boys sang. Some well-authenticated accounts say that the students who marched in rows lifted canes (gaulles) above their heads in unison, while others in chorus cried "Vive !" This evidently represented "Vive de Gaulle !"

What is certain is that these young people were showing their joy in demonstrating that this eleventh of November was not for them the day of penitence ordered by the Germans and Vichy. In spite of everything they still wanted to celebrate the anniversary of the victory of 1918, a day of pride and hope for France.

The Germans guessed the meaning of this procession and wanted to break it up.

A Parisian woman who had returned from Marseilles found herself in the middle of the Champs Elysées that day around five o'clock, and here is how she describes what she saw :

. . . I was in Paris on the 11th of November. The German authority had decreed that it would not be a general holiday and that all processions, all manifestations, all collective homage to the Unknown Soldier would be forbidden. A wreath with a hooked cross had been deposited on the tomb by its care in the morning and, as happens every day, its band had marched along the Champs Elysées to the sound of fife and drum followed by a goose-stepping regiment. Several times in the course of the day I had to walk on the Avenue. Since morning I had noticed that students who had forsaken their classes for the day were going up to the Arc de Triomphe in bands, their arms linked together. In the afternoon they became more numerous and more noisy. The department charged with the maintenance of order was invisible. I did not see the Etoile where troops would be massed along the approaches to the Circle in the little streets. I only noticed that the statue of Clemenceau at the rond-point was beflowered with innumerable little bouquets and that not one who passed did not stop for a moment, uncover, and remain in meditation. Never did Clemenceau receive a more unanimous and touching homage. The German soldiers and officers who passed by looked on deferentially, without any hostility.

At five o'clock I went to a building in the Avenue George V. At a quarter past five I heard coming from the Avenue the 'Houh ! Houh !' habitual to the 'monomials' of the Latin Quarter.

At a quarter to six a terrifying noise made me jump up and dash to the ground floor : two salvos of machine-gun fire. At the crossing of the two avenues, in front of the Fouquet's, an immense green sea of soldiers heaved, all pressing forward and inclining toward a central point. Two women in front of me, who had rushed out bareheaded from a shop, were weeping. I made agitated inquiries. "It seems that something happened at the Etoile—they fired into the Avenue." Another added : "There's a student there whom they've just trampled." A helmeted soldier suddenly detached himself from the mass, a heavy machine gun on his shoulder, and went charging up the Avenue ; others followed him in fan formation. I went around by a little street and emerged on the Champs Elysées twenty-five metres farther down. At the corner two great cars were already full of student prisoners ; they were filling a third. They made eighteen-year-old youngsters climb in, each between two German soldiers who held his arms. They did not cry ; terribly pale, very calm, proud. I thought of their mothers who that evening would not see them return, who would wait for them all night and for days, days, and days. The passers-by continued to circulate, hurried, calm, eyes lowered. I kept moving also.

I heard an eyewitness account of the day from a French girl of eighteen who has taken part in it. She confirmed the information in the letter just quoted but added that more than seven hundred students were pushed by the Germans in the entrances of the Métro (subway) at the Place de l'Etoile before being thrown into the cars as these arrived. Those who were fortunate enough to be assigned to the cars of the French police were released farther on, away from German surveillance. But those whom the Germans seized were held for a long time and a large number of them sent to Germany. The university was closed. All students, those not arrested like the others, were made to present themselves to the police every day up to the reopening of the university, which did not take place until January.

The young girl who had witnessed these facts told her story in a quiet manner. When she finished her mother said, "I did warn you, however, not to go to the demonstration."

She answered sweetly : "Yes, mother, but if you had been in my place what would you have done ?"

The second proof of the French awakening took place on January 1, 1941. In response to the appeal of General de Gaulle transmitted over the radio a great number of Frenchmen remained at home for an hour to think of the victory. Because of this the Germans were faced with empty streets.

A man from the unoccupied zone wrote to a friend in America and started off his letter with the words of General de Gaulle : "On January 1, from four o'clock to five o'clock in the unoccupied zone and

from five to six o'clock in occupied France, you will remain at home to celebrate the hour of hope." He then continued :

Four o'clock was about to strike and it was January 1. In "Free France" as in occupied France all those who believed in the future, who had hope, who had faith in a France which to-morrow would be cleansed and freed from the invader, gathered together. A minute of silence, a minute of hope, those are the symbols that have value. For us who have lived through days and nights of anguish, for our soldiers who have known weeks of hell, for our prisoners who have suffered months of slavery, for our refugees who have endured such physical and mental misery, for the handful of Frenchmen who struggle and die for us at this moment, for our allies, and finally for our quivering and mangled country—for all these we as men of honour (and there are a multitude of us) are going to have hope for one hour.

Another Frenchman who took part in the hour of hope expressed his debt to General de Gaulle in this letter posted to the United States :

General, I can at last hope to be able to transmit this letter to you to-day, written so many times in my thoughts since June, 1940. The sole comfort of the French—crushed, despairing, humiliated a little more every day by the abasement of their country—is to hear the London broadcasts and your voice.

To-day we religiously observed your orders and during the "hour of hope," as during every moment of the day, we blessed you, General, you who saved our honour—and we prayed God that He would protect England and save France.

We live in the hope of serving you soon.

A patriot writes from the occupied zone in the west of France :

**GENERAL DE GAULLE :**

In an hour when every Frenchman conscious of his duty must show his consciousness in a mute fashion we, a 100-per-cent French household ruined by two wars and deprived of our children, are with you in thought. How confident we are!—in you, in the Frenchmen who are on your side, and in the English. If we could only do as you are doing instead of appeasing the invader! But we are strong and we are resisting. After our hour of meditation we watch the scoundrels go by while we sing "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary," sip a dry gin, and smoke Players.

And how could anyone help liking the tone of this letter and the anecdote which ends it, written by a young woman living in a village on the Rhone and addressed to Free France by way of the British Broadcasting Company :

This is my first letter of the new year. It is for you. Who am

I? A woman who adores her country, who has suffered horribly at the coming of the Boches, and who since strives daily against the Anglophobes.

As to you, you are Free France and that suffices me. Every night we wait impatiently for your commentary on the news, and we are happy. We have entire confidence in you all and in our dear venerated General de Gaulle. We still expect to suffer a great deal, but that is of slight importance. One thing only counts for us, the liberation of our country. I say "our," for now I am writing you on behalf of several of our friends. We are all true patriots between twenty and thirty years old, all men and women determined to fight until the cursed race has been exterminated.

The cross of Lorraine is our emblem. I wear a superb gold one, blue background and red cross, and in the back of it your magnificent device "Honour and Fatherland."

As to the situation here, I don't want to say anything about it to-day, but you can have entire confidence that France will awaken ; to your call we'll answer "Present." What's more, I have promised a Boche captain to go to their home in a little while and recover all they have stolen from us. Do you know what he answered me ? "Nothing is impossible."

One could collect hundreds of letters written in the same spirit and sent on this same day, January 1, 1941, by Frenchmen who did not even know each other. These people who are so rarely unanimous were united in a single thought. Everyone wanted to take part in this symbolic and silent demonstration of the New Year, even to the French police, who were, however, the object of merciless surveillance from the Germans. It is said that certain policemen regulating traffic on the Paris streets at the hour of the demonstration told the stragglers with a gesture of their white sticks : "Go, hurry, it has begun!"

These scanty little details give one an idea of the quality of the hidden spirit in occupied and unoccupied France. With such a population it is easy to imagine the burst of merriment called forth by the good wishes that President Roosevelt addressed to Marshal Pétain this same January 1, 1941, to which he added the hope that France would later recover . . . liberty, equality, fraternity.

However desperate they may feel, the French have not lost their taste for the apropos and still like to have serious things expressed laughingly.

On May 4, the day of the festival of Joan of Arc, patron saint of France, the symbolical gestures of January 1 recommenced on a larger scale. Many people who never thought of celebrating it in normal times gathered together in a demonstration of unity and fidelity by staying at home during the appropriate hour. As a matter of fact the humiliated French take every occasion to affirm their loyalty.

When the inhabitants of Marseilles learned that Yugoslavia had entered the war rather than humble herself to the commands of Hitler they went in a crowd to the monument of Alexander of Yugoslavia. This former king of Serbia had been assassinated at Marseilles in 1934 along with Louis Barthou, French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Throughout Europe he was considered as one of the heroes of the war of 1914-18 and as a determined enemy of Germany. It was with this idea that the people of Marseilles wished to honour his memory under the very nose of the Gestapo.

More recently, in July, 1941, when the Germans succeeded in forcing the Vichy government to defend Syria against the Free French and the English, the departure of several French units sent as reinforcements to the Levant caused some extraordinary incidents to take place. A French lieutenant who enlisted in this troop with several of his comrades to get out of German-controlled France and join the Free French told the following story :

In the progress toward the German frontier—as the troops were to reach Syria by way of Germany—the French people, mysteriously warned, hurled insults at the convoy. In the stations, at the railroad crossings, groups formed, people cried : "Traitors, we hope you will be killed by the Free French or drowned by the English."

This popular indignation on the part of the French as recounted by this officer was in marked contrast with the empty obsequiousness of bearing that the German authorities showed toward the French soldiers who accepted or seemed to accept "collaboration."

These insults, these oaths hurled by the French people at the few Frenchmen who agreed to fight for the Germans represent the harsh, terrible, but just feeling that seems to develop in France ; the population do not think that the struggle between the French who "collaborate" and the Free French is a civil war, deplorable as such. They regard the French who collaborate as naturalized Germans. They scorn them and don't mourn if mishap comes to them in the service of Germany.

The glory that the Germans tried to foist upon the supposed defenders of Dakar, for example, was not taken seriously by the French people. On the contrary they blamed the Free French and the English severely for having failed to take the city.

The French begin to see things clearly. They were defeated from the time of the armistice agreements by their habitual weakness, a kind of confident amiability. But now after much suffering they have adapted themselves little by little to the implacable people who have conquered them. I have just spoken of letters and other proofs. There are other signs of the awakening in the France of to-day which are more clear-cut and more under-cover. From Marseilles to Lille and from Brest to Strasbourg, there are factories working for Germany which burst in flames and trains of war materials en route for Germany which explode or run off the rails. The German authorities storm and threaten, promise millions to anyone who denounces the guilty ones.

They carry out reprisals. They kill hostages. The people remain silent and clench their fists.

In Alsace and Lorraine, in these provinces where French patriotism has always reached impassioned heights and where the Germans have enforced a particularly inhuman regime since the occupation, the decisions of the gauleiter Joseph Buerckel show the unrest. Hitler's administrator of Alsace and Lorraine on August 15, 1941, declared that many young men had left the country for unoccupied France, thus refusing to serve in the German army. He ordered these young French patriots to return to their families immediately, or else these families would be transported to Germany and their members separated. In his proclamation, which was posted in occupied and unoccupied France Buerckel said :

We must rebuild Lorraine. We need workers. I have already imported more labour into Lorraine than into other parts of the devastated regions. Now we mobilize youths for work in other regions of their new country. It is logical that if Saarlanders and other Germans come to Lorraine to help rebuild war damage Lorainers can be sent to other provinces.

A small proportion of Lorraine youths preferred to flee to avoid labour service. Their parents carry the responsibility for their sons. I am glad to give them the possibility of correcting the mistake. If the sons return by August 15 I will not hold it against them. But families whose sons do not return will start the journey into the Reich August 16.

I cannot assure those families that they will not be broken up, because if parents agree to allow their sons to migrate to France they prove they do not desire to keep the family together. We will deport inland all families whose sons fail to do their labour service.

One may guess that these young men from Alsace-Lorraine whose actions so unnerve the German authorities have not left their homes for the simple pleasure of taking a walk in unoccupied France. They knew that General de Gaulle was collecting volunteers, but of this the Germans say nothing—they have too much fear of the moral influence of Free France ever to admit publicly that Free France exists.

The German authorities do not want either to recognize that French patriotism exists. All the signs of resistance, all the acts of sabotage that are increasing day by day in occupied and unoccupied France they attribute to communism. General Staelpnaegel, the German governor of Paris, was obviously carrying out this manœuvre in his edict of August 15 :

The French communist party having been dissolved, all communist activity in France is forbidden. Any person who engages in communist activity, who carries on communist propaganda, or who supports in any manner whatsoever the communist agita-

tion is Germany's enemy. Those guilty are liable to the death penalty, which will be pronounced by a German court martial.

Any person possessing an anti-German tract must hand it over immediately to the nearest German military service. Violations will be punished by sentences up to fifteen years of forced labour.

I depend on the wisdom and common sense of the population that everyone will contribute to prevent irresponsible elements from giving aid and comfort to the enemies of Germany. I warn you against the grave consequences which may flow from the hostile attitude of communist circles not only for the guilty parties themselves but also for the entire population of the occupied territories.

Unhappily for the Germans, newspapers written in French but pro-German, from both the occupied and unoccupied zones, especially the weekly *Gringoire*, never stop calling General de Gaulle a communist. Thus they betray the plot ! Much as Russia, her guns and her ideas worry the Germans, it is in reality French patriotism and Free France which the Germans fear the most in France.

All the French people know this. They know also like all the other enslaved peoples of Europe that the struggle has only begun and that a great revenge cannot be won in a day. From this comes their calm and their self-possession.

Women and children see as clearly, think as straight as the men in this crucial situation of France. Mothers who write to their sons fighting in the Free French forces make no more mistakes in tone than do the children who scribble their little letters decorated with red, white, and blue flags drawn in coloured crayon.

Women of all ages, wives and mothers, often ask General de Gaulle 'how the men who want to join up can do so.' Others want to know ways of helping the Free French, of working for them. They wish 'to send sweaters but can't get wool, so what can they do ?'

A mother writing from occupied France to the British Broadcasting Company in London about her son asks :

Perhaps it will be possible for you, sir, to let my son know that his mamma is in very good health, that she works every day, and that she preserves the same confidence and courage as on the day he went away.

Sir, pray tell him that his mamma asks him to behave always like a true Frenchman so that she can be proud of him. The good news of recent days only increases my confidence and faith in the victory of the armies of General de Gaulle and the Allies, and I can tell you that all my friends here think the same.

Another mother writes the following in February, 1941, to her sailor son in the Free French forces :

The essential thing is to know that you are well, that you

haven't lost your fine morale, and that you are sustained by hope. Let us be strong and confident in Providence. Life has imposed hard trials on me, but I have the joy of having fine children and an elder [son] who has the spirit of a leader, the sense of honour and duty. He can serve as an example to his brother who dreams only of imitating him. But first he must succeed in his studies, and circumstances have distracted him.

Every day goes by in communion of thoughts with you, and how many nights ! The rigours of winter have passed—spring makes us fear other dangers. May Providence be with you and bring you back very quickly. Write us without tiring yourself ; we are so happy to read your letters ! May we be able to give you the same happiness and may you find in these lines substance for hope.

I know you will always be the honest and loyal lad whom nothing will tarnish, and that you will carry your name high like a flag !

May God protect you, my beloved son, and guard you amid so many dangers. Be brave, but prudent.

Children and young people engrave the names of Generals De Gaulle, Catroux, Legentilhomme on the desks in their schools. With chalk and tar they trace on the walls the V's which signify Victory and the Lorraine cross. In fact, chalk has become a primary necessity for French youth and even for grown-ups. The other day in Marseilles one of my friends saw an unknown person who had descended from the tram placidly draw two large V's on the car to the accompaniment of sympathetic smiles from the other passengers. Children and grownups also often wear on their clothes insignia which they have invented : two poles for De Gaulle or a small piece of material with four holes for Catroux.<sup>1</sup> Many children write quietly and without fear to General de Gaulle.

A young girl from the occupied zone sent the following touching composition to General de Gaulle in January, 1941 :

General, I am writing you this letter with great emotion, for it is such a joy for me to address General de Gaulle. You cannot conceive the comfort you bring to us, as here in a little town of 4,000 inhabitants we are under the German boot.

These are some of the things the Boches have inflicted on people sixty kilometres from here. Students had posted signs with the following inscription : "Greece is hot—Macaronis cooked. Long live General de Gaulle." In reprisals the city was condemned to forty days without meat. Now in the theatre or cinemas the civilians are to keep a distance from the soldiers (note that if I were there I'd keep very far indeed), the reason being that recently a German soldier emerged from the cinema with a sign

<sup>1</sup> *Quatre trous* (Catroux) in French means four holes.

fastened on his back reading : 'I am a De Gaullist.' You can imagine how the people laughed.

Other facts, in the same city. There are some English nuns imprisoned in unheated rooms ; everything they eat must be cold ; they are allowed to accept food from the civilians, but it must be given to them cold.

Here in our town the Boche patrol inflicts a two-hundred-franc fine the first time, and eight days' imprisonment the second time, on the person who fails to camouflage his window—they are so afraid of the English bombers ! In our town a Fridolin committed suicide, after he had been home on leave and learned that his wife and two children had been killed by the bombardments. That is why the German radio always reports that there has been no damage.

New Year's Day, our town observed the hour of meditation requested by you, except for a few individuals, and these we have marked ; later we'll know how to punish them. Here the cross of Lorraine is the fashion ; a manufacturer, father of twelve children, makes them. His twenty-two-year-old daughter wore French and English flags as a boutonnière. The Boches took her to the Kommandantur and told her that they were going to imprison her.

I don't know anything else to tell you. If my letter reaches you I will send others.

All my admiration and sympathy for the French and English combatants.

Long live victory ! Long live France ! Long live England !

Another little girl from Savoie decorates her letter to General de Gaulle with a Lorraine cross.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

My name is Josette. I am twelve years old. I live in a little forlorn corner of Savoie and I am profiting by a trip to Switzerland to tell you how proud I am to have been a Gaullist since June 18 ! That day we were so grievously sad, gathered in the home of some friends, and when we heard your appeal, your so comforting voice, we stood up, our eyes filled with tears, beseeching you, as if you had been able to see and hear us, to save France, our beautiful France ! We can't afford to have a radio, but since the eighteenth of June every evening we have gone to some neighbours and Mamma, who is a true Frenchwoman, obliges my brother (ten years old) and me to listen to you each time you speak over the radio. More than one evening, when we had gone to bed and you were speaking at twenty-five minutes past eight, Mamma came to get us to have us listen to the broadcast until ten o'clock ! We weren't sleepy any longer ! When we are grown up we shall be able to say to our children : "During the war your grandmother made us listen to

General de Gaulle on the radio to teach us to love him and serve him so that we would know he saved the honour of France."

The indomitable hope you told us to have we do have, we spread it about. We go from door to door to strengthen some, shake others, open the eyes of those who wouldn't understand. The result has passed anything that could be imagined. And I am so happy to tell it to you. At school among my schoolmates I have done good work ; now they know you, they love you, they hope ! I got myself a piece of French-blue ribbon and I have been embroidering Lorraine crosses on it. I distribute the badges to all the De Gaullists I know ; my piece of ribbon gets shorter and shorter . . . I know by heart the time of the important broadcasts and the wave lengths ; I write them down on bits of paper and distribute them !

For Christmas each pupil had to make a drawing of Marshal Pétain. But I thought I ought also to make one for you, so you would know what a little girl whose uncle is a prisoner in Germany and whose aunt was driven out of Strasbourg hopes from you. It's not very well done, but I've put all my heart in it, all my application.

Every time I dream of you I always see you clad in magnificent rose-coloured silk and girt with a golden belt. It's a good omen !

My dear general, I kiss you in the name of all France.

JOSETTE.

All children are not so ambitious as young Josette, who speaks in the name of all France in embracing her dear general. But the tenour is the same.

A French child living in the Near East writes to General de Gaulle on January 7, 1941, and begins pompously enough with "Honour and Fatherland."

GENERAL,

I am a little French boy of ten who wants to express great admiration and respect for the courageous General de Gaulle who saved a part of our colonies and knew how to make us respected and raised our heads up again. I hope God will help you in this task and though I am very young I will do everything possible to get all my comrades to understand that our country must be saved.

I promise to study my English hard so that later I shall know it well and also love England who is helping you to save our France.

Accept, General, my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Long live Free France !

In March, 1941, a young man from Brittany gave General de Gaulle

an account of what was happening in his village, which had been occupied by the enemy :

You ask above all for facts. Here are some which will show you how well our new and undesirable tourists are behaving themselves :

A little while ago a letter of abuse reached the Commandant of our village. It was signed 'A collegian.' The furious Boche went to the college to find the guilty one. But there was no guilty person, for the very good reason that this letter had been written intentionally by a German. The poor collegians were obliged to do all kinds of heavy drudgery under a pouring rain (carrying heavy iron crossbars, dumping coal for these gentlemen).

Moreover for saying yes or no you can take a trip to prison and there you wait your turn and are not received except by appointment. The Germans also have to change their tactics frequently because at the present time we consider going to prison the greatest honour that can be granted a Frenchman.

Wearing the cross of Lorraine is forbidden, but if we are prevented from wearing it openly we can at least have it under our coats.

Germans are not allowed to get drunk ; however, they drown their sorrows in wine while awaiting drowning in the Channel.

The letter bore insignia accompanied by the following remarks :

Here are the insignia that we wear and that are manufactured by us. Pale blue tissue paper bordered with white, two poles (gaules, De Gaulle) embroidered in white, four holes bordered with white on a red background (Catroux). We hang the Lorraine cross in the middle.

But the most touching of all the messages from young people is perhaps the following—from a French lad to his father, an officer in the Free French forces :

Life here, all bird-limed with the atmosphere of the debacle, isn't funny, far from it.

All that doesn't matter, it's only temporary, and we would accept much worse still provided our country didn't sink into slavery. What's to be done to prevent it ? The immense majority of the French people have their eyes and ears turned toward you, our last hope, in fact.

Again, my dear papa, all our affection ; all our admiration ; I am living to see you again soon ; how happy all of us will be !

These are the thoughts that the French of all ages confided in their letters. . Often they end with one brief slogan : "Long live France, America, and England !" or "De Gaulle, Roosevelt, Churchill ; three

names and all the hope of the world !” or, again, “ Cursed be the tyrants of Europe !”

The Germans notice this awakening. Every day the French people draw further away from them and many of the invaders are worried. Poor Germans ! They want to smash everything, rule everything, seize everything—and they want their victims to love them !

The French, who were too trusting and too mild, are beginning to comprehend the high price of liberty and to defend this liberty. They are growing tougher and more pugnacious.

An employee of the French Postal Service writes to the National Broadcasting Company :

In permanent contact with the public, we well know the temper of the country. The great public ‘make a fist in their pockets,’ as the current colloquialism expresses it. A secret and violent revolt ferments in all social strata, in all parties, and in all the healthy elements of the nation.

But this spirit of resistance and reborn pride, this spirit of a great people who are finding themselves again, is even better expressed, it seems to me, in these closing paragraphs of a letter from a demobilized French pilot now living in the South of France to a friend in America.

They say the army flew the coop. It’s not true. I saw it. The units that were officered fought to the end, the pupils of lay schools like the children of the good Fathers, the readers of *l’Action Française* like the communists. True, at the passage of the Loire it was nothing but a retreating mob : there were no more orders, the general staffs couldn’t be located, the high command was playing high politics. . . . But the mechanics were working twenty hours out of twenty-four so that the ‘buses’ [planes] would be ready for their desperate and useless missions. Don’t let it be said that the soldiers of ’40 weren’t as good as those of ’14 and ’18. It’s unjust, it’s wrong, and solely destined to justify those who could not foresee any more in ’39 than they could in ’14 that war was about to break out. Only things went very much faster, and there was no Marne. Surely you know all that, but I owe it to my comrades, to my chums who fulfilled their missions, wounded, flying in dismantled buses, to say it before anything else is said, now that the trap door of our prison is part way open.

Give my regards to your daughters. May they not forget the old country, and not blush for it, despite so many mistakes, weaknesses, and treasons. Remind them what Desaix said to Bonaparte at Marengo, at the time when the generals were twenty-eight years old : “Yes, the battle is lost, but there’s still time to win another.” That’s the grace I wish for us.

P.S.—A last *au revoir*. I have re-read my letter, hoping you will

be able to read it yourself despite the very thin paper. I find it more cheery than I am myself. You have to have lived through what it is like to surrender your material after defeat, material that remains in the enemy's control ; you have to have seen German soldiers guarding French cannon to understand that things like that scar you for life. But since one hasn't had the luck to 'remain' there before seeing that, one must resist, and resist again. *Au revoir*, till soon, surely. And long live France.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE CROSS OF LORRAINE

I SAW GENERAL DE GAULLE again, in London, before finishing this book I wanted to make certain that no inadvertent falsification of his ideas had crept into these pages that try to express my conception of the Free French and of their spirit.

During the hour that I spent with the general in his office in Carlton Gardens I took particular pains to understand clearly his ideas on the future of France. The head of the Free French must have this question asked him often, because he smiled when he answered :

"You can readily imagine that it is impossible to carry on a fight like the one we have started without arousing a great deal of comment. Some say that I am in league with the Communists, the Masons, and the Jews. Others are certain that I want to establish in France either a monarchy, imperialism, or even a personal dictatorship. All these wiseacres are forgetting one simple fact : France has been invaded. I became head of the Free French and ruler of part of the empire because France has been invaded. Otherwise I would merely be an officer doing his job like others in our army—that's how I had expected to finish my career. I am not a politician. I am a simple patriot who wants to liberate France.

"In their eagerness to attack me personally, some people have invented what they call 'De Gaullism.' What I want is the union of all Frenchmen to drive the Germans out of France and prevent their ever returning. If that is 'De Gaullism' then I'm all for it. I have not and I do not want to have any political ties. My goal is the union of all Frenchmen for the resurrection of France."

I asked, "What is the function of the Council of Empire Defence ?"

"We must make a distinction," the general answered, "between two different things : On the one hand, circumstances have made me the guardian of large French territories and populations in Africa and elsewhere. I have to administer them for the duration of the war. For this purpose I have taken measures valid for the time of the war only.

"On the other hand, there is France. There the situation is very simple. In what I have called 'a pronunciamento of panic' the

Vichy government has violated the Constitution of 1875, which for me is still valid. When France is liberated I shall abandon the prerogatives that the exigencies of command during the war may have led me to assume. France herself through her popular assemblies, freely chosen, will then decide the form of her government. . . .

"I understand perfectly," the general went on, "why you asked me such questions about the future and that's why I have answered them. But you must understand yourself that my whole concern is given to the France of to-day. She is well worth consideration."

There was a silence. I didn't need to break it by asking new questions, for it was obvious that the head of the Free French forces intended to continue. His face expressed concentration and respect.

"It has already been clearly proved," he said, "that Frenchmen are of themselves rising up from the midst of their misfortune. Certain people had thought—others had even hoped—that Frenchmen would go under in despair. Just the opposite has happened. France no longer sees herself as conquered forever. She knows that on the continent her army has suffered a terrible defeat. She knows that a majority of her civil and military leaders lacked the strength necessary to make great decisions when it was still time and to continue the war from the empire overseas. But France knows too that she still has part of this empire and with it a battle fleet which is the second in Europe and a merchant marine of 3,000,000 tons. She knows that she still has fifty billions in gold francs. She knows above all that she still has her soul."

"That is exactly," I put in, "what the men of Vichy have agreed to ignore."

"Yes," the general continued. "But the Free French remember it. They are putting back into action the colonial territories, troops, warships, and merchant ships as fast as they can get control of them. That is how Free France will safeguard the honour and even the very life of France. They are sustaining in the French people the spirit of loyalty to our Allies and the self-respect which are the only forces preventing the enemy from using the nation he has conquered for his own war ends."

"This action implies, doesn't it, General, that you are in constant communication with the Frenchmen in both occupied and unoccupied France?"

"Certainly. We are separated only from the men of Vichy who seized power in the midst of panic and hysteria, who destroyed the free institutions of the nation, suppressed all popular representation, all freedom of speech. These men accepted not only slavery but also active collaboration with the enemy. Free France opposes them with all the weight of the centuries-old traditions and liberties of France. As for those upholders of 'collaboration' who base their claims on some military authority, the Free French oppose them with this dictum of Napoleon : 'A general under the power of the enemy has lost the right to give orders.' "

The general pronounced these words with a conviction that was profoundly sincere. You felt that he had a hard time avoiding mention of the names of the leading men in Vichy.

I asked almost before I was aware of it, "Do you believe that the confidence, that the assurance that we feel really penetrates into France?"

The answer to my question seemed so obvious to him that he laughed with astonishment :

"Most certainly," he said. "For a short while after the armistice, Frenchmen were crushed under the shock of the disaster, under the orders given, first from Bordeaux and then from Vichy, to all authorities, under the doubt, deliberately fomented, as to the resistance of England and the intentions of the United States. What's more, the Free French were scarcely even in existence. We had to start from scratch in all departments, political and administrative as well as military. But to-day our hopes have begun to be fulfilled alongside the English and the Americans. Our personal efforts have made it possible to put into the struggle troops, planes, and ships, and to liberate a colonial empire of six million men. Free France has become the symbol of national resistance. You will remember that on January 1, 1941, in response to a simple request on our part broadcast over the London radio, all Frenchmen in both occupied and unoccupied territory took part in a magnificent demonstration. For an hour—the Hour of Hope—they abandoned the streets of the cities and villages, leaving only the enemy abroad, and retired to their homes to think together of the nation and of victory."

"This simple manifestation carried out by millions of men proves that those who speak in the name of France are neither the newspapers nor the radio stations controlled by the enemy, nor are they the ministers who fight over the outer trappings of power at Vichy. Those who speak in the name of France are the Free French. And however restricted may be their numbers, however modest may be their persons, they are clothed with the dignity of men who embody the hopes of their native land."

"Don't you believe that along with Free France, the Frenchmen who have remained under German authority place all their hopes in an English victory?"

The general replied warmly : "England is playing a part of incalculable importance in the French resurrection. She is helping it through her admirable fight. That is the finest way to encourage enslaved France and to stretch out to her a brotherly hand. In addition England supports the Free French. I am certain that when it decided right after the armistice to help those Frenchmen who were determined to continue the fight the British government displayed a foresight and a confidence in the French people the practical sense of which, as well as the generosity, will be borne out by history. . . . I am sure that Winston Churchill will have no cause to regret having said: 'I refuse to believe that the soul of France has died and that her place among the great nations is lost forever.' "

The general was silent for a time ; then he added : "You know, one never has cause to regret having kept faith in France."

After a moment I asked, "And what do you think, now, of the role of America ?"

"It remains, as I told you in June, 1940, the decisive factor of the war. Through her industrial power America can bring to the Allies the means of defeating the Germans in the very field on which they have placed the war—the mechanical field. And remember that alone among the great peoples the Americans are free from the thousand prejudices that centuries of military tradition have imposed on the nations of Europe. Those prejudices caused the loss of France. The freedom of thought which young America still enjoys makes it possible for her to create a purely modern army and armaments really in conformity with the demands of our time. I believe that victory will come through the tenacity of the English and their Allies and through the youth of America."

"The youth of America !" As he said these words I saw the general's face clear, I knew very well why : he was thinking, this young general, of an entirely new army, of the marvellous instrument that was being forged there. This instrument of victory was the height of his dreams. I said to him :

"You say victory, but you don't say quick victory."

"No. On the day when the French army was knocked out it became evident that Germany could be conquered only in a war of world-wide scope, the first stage of which would be the blockade of Europe by the English naval and imperial forces. This period ought to give time for the construction of the mechanized armies that will one day defeat Germany. It ought also to give time for the material and psychological weakening of Germany. This will be accomplished through aerial bombardment, through the blockade, through the very length of the war. In the meantime, as the traveller, climbing a hard road, takes courage when he sees his companions climbing at the same pace as himself and hears them singing the same song, so we are strengthened because we know which side we are on. And I don't think we could find a better phrase to express our feelings than the one President Roosevelt used recently when he took his oath to uphold the Constitution and voiced the state of mind of the great American nation. 'This country,' the President said, 'has placed its destiny in the hands and in the hearts of millions of free men and women. It has placed its faith in liberty under the will of God.' "

This interview with General de Gaulle took place early in February, 1941. On March 1 he expressed himself even more clearly in a speech before three thousand members of the Association of the French in Great Britain at Kingsway Hall, London. He said :

This meeting of several thousand good Frenchmen and French-women, who have come simply because here they can be together and participate in the same emotion, is a comfort for each one of us.

But we must also see in this a proof, among many others, of a fact which has very great importance : that is, the assertion of the national will under trial. For France is one and indivisible, and we all know that what is going on in the hearts of the three thousand French people here is going on at the same time in the hearts of 42,000,000 others.

A nation crushed on the field of battle, two-thirds occupied, and the rest controlled by the enemy, emptied of its resources to the profit of the invader, deprived of any possibility of making its voice heard, cut off from all communication with the rest of the world, worked upon by a press and a radio at the disposal of the adversary, subjected to an authority which, led astray by defeatism, attempts to identify salvation with disaster, order with slavery, duty with dishonour—this is the situation in which her temporary defeat has placed our France.

Certain persons have been capable of doubting that the French spirit would resist this ; and there has been no lack of hostile or simply frivolous people who believe that our mother country, in her despair, was about to undergo a sort of moral dissolution. Even in France those men who have faith only in their ‘castles in the air’ and acknowledge no law but their own interest, those men whom the decadence of our regime had caused to multiply in politics, the army, the press, society, and business, have rushed headlong into servitude. Finally, the abominable propaganda of humiliation and renunciation has succeeded in influencing some feeble spirits and some uncertain hearts. This collection of ill will, cowardice, and mediocrity might give rise to the supposition that France, attacked at the very sources of her life, would fall into the state of chronic decay in which nations lose their will and even the taste for independence—in short that France was nothing but a great memory of the past, a victim of the present, an accessory for the future.

Ah, what an answer our people are giving to-day to those who doubted them ! In fact, since the capitulation which some terrified leaders imposed upon its stupor—not its consent—the French nation has not lost for one day the consciousness of what it is or the resolution to remain what it is. Better still, in every city, every town and village, the nation is weaving the secret system of its resistance. We know what they are thinking and saying in our homes, our schools, our workshops and markets. We know what insignia are hidden on French breasts. We know what writings circulate from hand to hand. We know what inscriptions are spread upon the walls. We know the meaning of that sidewise look of the men, those lowered eyes of the women when they pass the enemy in the street. We have known the immense silence which spread over the mother country on January first during the ‘Hour of Hope,’ and if other proofs were necessary we could cite thousands of them, as many proofs

as there have been volunteers coming to us through so many difficulties. We could name thirty very recent proofs—the thirty brave men here, who joined us yesterday.

Nevertheless, to justify their surrender and legitimate their authority, the men who made the armistice and seized the power at Vichy are trying, in agreement with the enemy, to develop the complex of a supposed national guilt among us. According to them, France is supposed to be a great sinner, justly punished for her sins, and must abase herself in expiation. According to them, it seems that our people, absorbed by self-interest, intoxicated with pleasure, had neglected work, contemned order, and ignored duty ; what is more, according to them, this people threw itself madly into war at a moment when, in the degree of decadence to which it had fallen, it was capable of nothing more than folding its arms and leaving the field free to all others. Once that had happened, having succumbed to the inevitable defeat, salvation for this people would be, it seems, in repentance, renunciation and submission. And as for the French who aim at extricating their country from the disaster, their victory would imply the greatest possible misery, since it would put an end to this just punishment.

It is easy to see how such humility plays into the hands of the invader, and also how it suits the regents who have appointed themselves to correct the supposed faults of the nation ; but above all, we see here first a lie, and then an odious pretext for the abasement of the mother country.

It is false that our people deserved to be oppressed, pillaged, and dishonoured. The French people in the previous war victoriously suffered losses, endured sacrifices and expended efforts which greatly surpassed the losses, sacrifices, and efforts of all other peoples without exception. Those who once built upon that basis that which was once their glory should be the last to forget it. Even though we had, for the sake of our common victory, buried the third and the best third of our youth, spent the half of our national fortune, and undergone immense devastations, by a miracle of labour we reconstructed everything that had been ravaged, put our people back to work, restored and increased our production. At the same time we completed the edifice of our empire, realizing in Morocco, Tunisia, Indo-China, and elsewhere works which aroused universal admiration, and all this without injury to a magnificent expansion of the thought, invention, and activity of the French. Certainly this is not to say that so many difficulties did not bring a few disturbances in their train. The twenty years that passed between the two wars were marked in our country, as everywhere else, by various economic crises, accompanied by social skirmishes. Certainly the abuses of the parliamentary regime, which had become intolerable, resulted in a serious weakening of authority in the state and its adminis-

trations. Certainly public opinion had been troubled by frightful political, judiciary, and police scandals. Certainly we saw regrettable outbreaks of damaging agitation. But such scratches were on the surface. The deep life of the nation was not changed by them, and for that matter there were a thousand signs of the nation's will to be cured of them. In the scales where the debit and credit of peoples are weighed, the weight of these errors counted very little against the enormous sum of the merits and virtues of France.

It is true that the disaster to our armies may have seemed to result from a sort of internal ruin, as the collapse of a building suddenly demonstrates the seriousness of the cracks in its foundations. It is a fact that under the action of German mechanical force our defence was shattered. But we know enough to-day about the revolution the aeroplane and tank have made in the art of war to realize that the defeat could not be imputed to the impotence of the French people. Our armies never rejected sacrifice or refused obedience for a single day, nor did they break their ranks. Up to the last minute they fought everywhere, wherever it was possible to fight. But they were paralyzed by the new system of war, of which the essence is that neither numbers nor courage nor discipline, but only a system of war of the same nature and equal value can prevail against it.

Our military defeat was the simple result of the outworn concepts under which the French army was prepared and commanded as if to fight the last war, instead of having renewed its means, tactics, and strategy in view of a future war. If the nation was the victim of such a technical aberration, as had already been the case at Crécy and Sedan, this does not imply in any way its weakness or unworthiness. When by any chance some of our troops in the battle found themselves in possession of the necessary arms, no inferiority to the enemy was observed. And I know of a certain armoured division, improvised in the midst of the struggle, which subjected the Germans to exactly the same treatment that their eleven Panzer divisions gave us.

As for the fact that the French people entered the war in September, 1939, at a time when no immediate threat was hanging over our frontiers, and that this intervention was bound to attract the full weight of German aggression, this was the opposite of 'an outrageous folly.' Before the will to domination which was displayed by Hitler's Germany, France acted as she should have acted. Certainly her principal forces are now outside the battle. Certainly invasion and oppression have let loose upon her an unprecedented train of suffering. But France regrets nothing. France knows that in refusing to fight she would have assured the domination of the dictators and at the same time would have consented irremediably to her own slavery. We are an old people, and we have lived long enough to know that there is one champion

without whom free men can do nothing. Neither are we unaware that our own independence implies the support of those who are opposed to tyranny. There is a compact, three times more than a century old, between the greatness of France and the liberty of the world.

In fact, our country has done its duty to humanity once again, and even though it is crushed, its vanguard continues to do that duty through the effort of the Free French. It was the French force which allowed other nations to put themselves into condition to resist and win. In spite of the disaster, some French forces continue the fight at the side of these other nations. If D'Aguesseau was right in saying of a man, 'The greatest good in this world is love for one's country,' it is equally true that for a people the surest star in the tempest is fidelity to its mission.

When we measure the courage the French nation shows in its terrible ordeals, when we evoke its will and think of its destiny, we cannot avoid a deep irritation at the means used by the enemy to prevent any recovery. Having beaten our armies on the field of battle, it was the enemy's task to make the defeat spread to the whole French people and make it last. To this end, he was clever enough to use the instrument offered him by the pseudo-government, tied down by its own capitulation and unable to escape from it. What Germany and Italy have still to fear from France is, first of all, the national hatred which prevents their using men and things in France as they will. And subsequently, it is the use of the powerful weapons still left to us, our empire, our fleet, and our gold.

In order to get hold of these without effort, our enemies employ the weakness or infamy of those who have already decided to accept slavery—those who are acting out the fable of the fox who had his tail cut and tried to cut the tails of all others.

Vichy is attempting to turn the anger of France against Frenchmen. When it accuses some of having been responsible for the war and others of wishing to continue it, Vichy fully satisfies the desire and interest of the invader. What enchantment and what profit for Hitler and Mussolini when the men who pretend to constitute the French Government proclaim as the rule of their policy not only total acceptance of defeat but, even more, collaboration with the conqueror ! What enchantment and what profit for Hitler and Mussolini when the orders given by Vichy, and the illusions attached to the person of some men who figure there, result in neutralizing the second fleet of Europe and the second empire of the world at a time when Paris, Bordeaux, Lille, Rheims, Strasbourg are in the hands of the conqueror !

And even so, it requires great naïveté to imagine that Hitler and Mussolini will be content with these negative advantages. By combining blackmail with the misery of France, the terror of total occupation with collaboration, they want to get out of

Vichy, and in fact are getting, more direct aid. Having pillaged the country of all its raw materials, robbed our iron from the East, our coal from the North, our potash from Alsace, and our bauxite from the Alps, they are organizing, in agreement with Vichy, a certain resumption of French industrial activity, but only for those among our factories which can be made to work for their armaments. Having carried off everything that was necessary to nourish the population from our granaries, mills, and barns, they are now using Vichy to obtain from our empire, and from foreign countries, food supplies of which they take the greater part. Having made Vichy arrange matters so that the Free French could not rally a large part of the empire to the cause of France without risking a battle between Frenchmen, they are now beginning to infiltrate in North and West Africa.

Last week eighty well-chosen Germans arrived at Casablanca to spread out in our Morocco and await the arrival of others. At the same time a so-called 'study commission' from Berlin was operating in our Near East. And finally, having allowed the men of Vichy to win the confidence of various foreign circles by claiming for themselves the sympathy due to France, the enemy is at present exploiting Vichy's propaganda and representatives to create confusion of mind abroad. We may be sure that the dictators will not stop at that. We may be sure that they plan to pursue the progressive disintegration of our mother country and empire, playing on the fear, ambition, and dishonour of their collaborators, so as to accomplish that complete subjection to which *Mein Kampf* insolently condemns our France.

But the resolution of the country is so solid now that the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.

All the panoply of flattering incense and cantatas, all the machinery of chains and prisons, can never again change the national unity reconstituted by a thousand secret communicating channels. Even at Vichy itself the consequences are revealed by continual alterations in structure and persons. Even the most determined declared sponsors of the enemy declare in a subsidized newspaper that : 'To preach collaboration is to preach in a desert.'

The cause has been heard. The nation rejects submission, the nation does not acknowledge itself either decadent or guilty, the nation feels towards the enemy nothing but the bitter desire to tear him to pieces one day. The nation has only one hope, victory, and only one thought, that of its sons who are fighting to win it—and who, rejecting 'the new order' with all those catchwords of the disaster, want a New France.

But since there is no other expression of the will of France than the voice, action, and arms of the Free French, since it is clear that this voice, action, and arms are the only arguments the mother country still has, we propose to use them to say and do

what she wishes. Until the day when it shall become possible for the whole of France to express herself, it is our duty to do it in her name. Temporary but resolute trustees of her moral and material patrimony, inspired only by the will to serve and defend her, we shall not only throw into the fight for her liberation all of her forces at our command, we shall not only make her law and her justice reign in such of her territories as acknowledge our authority, we shall not only guard for her her alliances and her friendships, but we shall also serve as guide and help for her at home and we shall enforce her rights abroad.

In this war, the greatest in history, France shall not have given in of her own will. Already, thanks to us, her effort is reborn on land, sea, and air, as well as in the domain of moral, social, and spiritual influences. Linked by us for life or death to her admirable allies, France, covered with blood and tears, but faithful to her greatness, pursues the way of salvation.

What will the France of to-morrow be like? On the surface, we cannot foresee. But underneath, we know very well. Once freed of the invader she will once again stand for what she has always stood for: the dream of liberty organized by the intelligence.

Maurice Barrès—father of the author of this book—wrote in his ‘Notebooks’ in 1916 during the Battle of Verdun: ‘Every Frenchman has a very clear idea of France’s special mission. France exists so that there may be less suffering in the world. It is for that reason she is pacifist and it is for that reason too that she is a warrior.’

Pacifist, France certainly was yesterday, even too much so. To-day in order to liberate herself she must find again, under the oppression of the enemy, her warlike qualities. The Free French know that France will never recover those qualities or her fighting spirit by obeying dismal injunctions to penitence, humility, and submission to the enemy as they are formulated in Vichy. What France needs for her awakening is, as ever, to believe in a progress in her own life and in the life of the world. She needs the prospect of being able to build a world less evil than that of the cruel German New Order; a world in which men will *exist* individually, framed in by the state of course but not crushed by it; a world in which science will be something besides the slave of the armaments industry, in which education will be something besides just a machine for moulding the minds and hearts of men according to a monotonous pattern. What France wants is to give free rein to her natural generosity and her civilizing instincts.

The Free French feel this need of France for some bright hope. French as they are, they experience it in themselves and they desire to become the servants and consolers of their oppressed country. They hold out hope to her from the unconquered soil of England and from the lands of the French empire that have joined her.

Of course the Free French are as yet only a fraction of France and of the French empire, but they are acting as a catalyst through the

force of their example and of their feelings. It is enough for them to stick to the line of the national instincts, to say the words and do the deeds that the imprisoned French cannot say and cannot do. At the beginning they were able to do little but offer solace to France in her grief, but by-and-by they will arouse her to action. Already to-day everyone knows that without the Free French, France might have given up everything and would probably have allowed herself to be completely separated by the Germans from her Allies, who are still fighting and who will conquer. To-morrow it may be that every Frenchman will become a Free Frenchman at heart.

Thus the first stage in the renaissance of France is coming into being because hope is reviving and because defeatism and the spirit of submission to Germany are forced into the discard.

The Germans can dominate France only with the help of defeatism. When France is really awakened she will discover that her invaders are a great deal more vulnerable, psychologically speaking, than anyone suspected. Unstable, badly equipped to understand the growing resistance of all the European peoples they have attempted to enslave, susceptible to home-sickness, more and more worried by the length of the war, more and more disconcerted by the tenacity of the English—and of the Americans—the Germans will show themselves for what they are : soldiers able to win a battle so long as they have a superiority in organization and arms but unqualified to keep for ever under the yoke a Europe in which old and proud nations are awakening to the spirit of revolt. These nations are encouraged by the example of those of their sons who have not ceased to fight and who are at present struggling at the side of the English : men of the armies of Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Russia, Polish volunteers grouped under the flag of the White Eagle, Free French under the Tricolour and the cross of Lorraine.

When they took as emblem the cross of Lorraine, the Free French expressed clearly their spirit and their deepest feelings. Ever since the time when Joan of Arc carried it on her banner the cross of Lorraine has been the symbol of what is now once more at stake : French national independence. It has always been the sign to which our eastern provinces, our most menaced provinces, rallied in the face of outward aggression, in victory as well as in defeat.

In 1873, shortly after the Treaty of Frankfort by which Prussia took Alsace and a part of Lorraine from France, the people in the lost territories joined with the people of the still French Lorraine in an unforgettable ceremony. At the traditional pilgrimage site of Lorraine, on the altar of the Basilica of Sion, 'La Colline Inspirée,' near Nancy, they laid a cross of Lorraine, broken in half, with an inscription which affirmed their hope : 'Not for ever.'

Forty-seven years later, on June 27, 1920, another solemn ceremony brought the people of Lorraine together again on the hill of their

traditional pilgrimage. People of the Meuse, the Meurthe, the Moselle, men from the Vosges, soldiers of the famous 20th and 21st Army Corps, bishops from Strasbourg, from Nancy, from Saint-Dié, from Metz, from Luxembourg, deputies from Lorraine and Alsace—they had come, more than thirty thousand strong, to express their joy as liberated men, to the spot where their fathers had sworn their loyalty even in defeat.

Maurice Barrès, whose compatriots had singled him out for this honour, brought together the two halves of the cross of Lorrain, broken in 1873 as a symbol of the separation of the two Lorraines. He fastened them together, this time to mark their reunion, with a palm of gold. And the inscription 'Not for ever' was replaced by another which read 'For ever.'

In June, 1940, inexcusable mistakes have brought us again to the worst days of defeat. We have had to return to the sorrowful formula of 1873. France this time has not lost only a province, she is entirely in the hands of the enemy. She has not to fight merely for her soil; her very soul is threatened, her great ideal of liberty is in peril all over the world. But in this gigantic struggle, as in the smaller battles of yesterday, the cross of Lorraine has not ceased to speak for France and all that she stands for. The old national symbol now adopted by the Free French means exactly the same as what grand old Georges Clemenceau meant in 1918 when he answered every petty questioner :

"I make war (*je fais la guerre*) because with the Boche at Noyon there is absolutely nothing else to do."

The cross of Lorraine means exactly what the patriots of the French Revolution wrote on their tricolour flags in the somewhat pompous style of the time : 'Vaincre ou mourir, la liberté ou la mort' (Victory or death, freedom or the grave)."

That is why the cross of Lorraine is being passed from hand to hand all over occupied and unoccupied France. That is why men and women, little girls and boys wear it on their breasts. It proclaims as it has proclaimed for centuries, at every time when the free spirit of France has been brutally trampled, that the humiliation of France will not last, that defeat is : 'Not for ever.'

LONDON, June, 1940.  
NEW YORK, September, 1941.

THE END

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